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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MAIRIN JOSEFINA MORENO-MERIDA – AMBASSADOR OF VENEZUELA

SPEAKER	TRANSCRIPTION
DR. MALKA	Hello, I'm Dr. Amaleya Goneos-Malka, welcome to 'Womanity – Women in Unity'. The show that celebrates prominent and ordinary African Women's milestone achievements in their struggles for liberation, self-emancipation, human rights, democracy, racism, socio-economic class division and gender based violence.
DR. MALKA	Joining us in studio today is the Ambassador of Venezuela Mairin Moreno. Welcome to the show Ambassador.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Thank you, thank you very much Amaleya for invitation.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador you are the Ambassador of Venezuela to the Republic of South Africa; can you share with us some of the work that you do as well as the responsibilities that come with holding this position?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Okay Amaleya. My job is to represent the government of the Bolivarian of the Republic of Venezuela in South Africa where is a great responsibility and much more in this historic moment that we are living in when our country is being threatened and attacked by the imperial forces and imagine, you must know that the US government had imposed economic sanctions and threatened our countries with military intervention, you know, this is the situation in our country in this moment and we need to explain the war and the people in South Africa the real situation in Venezuela.
DR. MALKA	Of course and that must be part of your role being here as the representative and the ambassador of your country. What would you say is the greatest challenge that you have in performing this role?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Okay in this moment our priority is to tell the word the truth; defend the Bolivarian Revolution and all the achievements that we have achieved in the last eighteen years and show with the South African people all our achievements, all our...the work that we do in Venezuela.
DR. MALKA	So a lot from a social point of view, a culture point of view and...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes,, yes...
DR. MALKA	...economic... And are there any specific milestones that you want to achieve in this term?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	The achievement of the Bolivarian Revolution have crossed the border. For example in the area of education - I work in that area - we have several programmes in Africa to support children's Angel People with the school and university age. Currently Venezuela has eighteen embassies in Africa and we have a programme calledIn Africa - Support One School in Africa, we have this programme in all our embassies in Africa and also in all the countries that we attend which consists of providing children, either by building schools; improving them, giving them a school supplies and giving them the necessary support to enable them improved condition and have a better development in their studies. In South Africa we support four schools, two schools in Mamelodi, two schools in Eastern Cape, we support two years ago one in Limpopo in Belleville. Also through the International Student Programme in Venezuela, I was responsible for this programme for many

	years....
DR. MALKA	...I saw that...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...ja...we have managed to train more than six thousand students from different countries around the world including twenty-one African countries in our universities in different careers with the intention of integrating them into the productive system of their countries. It is important to point out that this programme is aimed at youth people with low economic resources who do not have the possibility to pay for their studies in their countries of origin, which in Venezuela the education is totally free from pre-school until university.
DR. MALKA	And how do you provide those opportunities, so we're talking about people who are disadvantaged, do they approach the embassy and say I want to apply for a bursary to study in Venezuela; how does it work?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	In this moment we're waiting to open the new scholarship...
DR. MALKAyes...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, this year we didn't have. We're waiting for the new scholarship, when we have the information we tell you to you inform other people to come to the embassy.
DR. MALKA	I think that's wonderful and that's something that goes not just in South Africa but applies to the other eighteen embassies situated in the rest of the continent?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, in...in...yes, yes.
DR. MALKA	We work in a global society now it's not a case of just one domain. Can you tell us more about some of the projects that you're working on with your counterparts in other countries in Africa, so besides the education policy, are there any other big projects that you're doing?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	In this moment our....the more important project is in education because Venezuela supports and now we start with South Africa in mining areas, we're working with South Africa to....because in Venezuela we start with the mining sector 'cause you know in Venezuela the 90% of our budget in Venezuela comes from oil and now we're start with the new activities and the mining is our priority in this moment and South Africa have experience and we signed agreement with South Africa and many companies in South Africa to help us in this sector. This is a very important project for us in this moment with South Africa.
DR. MALKA	It's a strong economic driver and obviously there's mutual benefit between the two countries.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Ja, ja.
DR. MALKA	Now my programme "Womanity – Women in Unity" is all about gender equality and because of that that will be our main highlight in the conversation today and I wanted to start by asking you what are some of your perspectives about women's empowerment and gender equality legislation?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	In Venezuela, I can speak about Venezuela....in Venezuela thanks to the Bolivarian Revolution we have had many achievements in the area of gender equality in our country, no certainly achieving equality between men and women depend of anformation in attitudes at all levels of society starting with the base and continuing to the highest level of the government. In Venezuela the national government institute is the state body that implement the public policies managing from the Ministry of Women.

	Ministry of Women powered for the women gender equality.
DR. MALKA	And when we were speaking offline you mentioned that this change has really only happened in the last eighteen years, eighteen years prior there was no institute for women.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Before eighteen years we have ministry, the Ministry of Family that they attend all the issues with the women but now with the revolutionary government who create athe Inminmohair sorry, it's the institute for women and after we create the Ministry of the Women and now Iminmohair is part of the ministry of women but Inminmohair is responsible of the applying all the policy topics....
DR. MALKA	...so gender policies....
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...everything is driven under those...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, yes...
DR. MALKA	...instit....the ministry for her, the gender institute...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENOyes there'ssome of the public policies for the permanent defence of the human right of the woman, know to...in order to promote the real and effective access to all is first of social life on equal terms and conditions with men. It is incumbent on Inminmohair to promote and strengthen the institutional mechanism of the national labour for defence of the human right of the woman.
DR. MALKA	And it's a very strong law, as you were saying...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...that women are really regarded as equals in Venezuela in society, that if there is any - how can you say it - if anyone does anything to a woman to defame her she has the right to go and denounce them publicly.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes in Venezuela the laws to protect the women is very, very, very strong, yes.
DR. MALKA	And in your career given what you've spoken about now, have you witnessed any changes in terms of gender progression from when you first started to where you are today?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Okay with regard to the representation of our diplomatic mission, the participation of the women as head of mission has significantly increased. Now our minister of foreign affairs two months ago was a woman, was the first minister of foreign affairs woman and she is currently the president of the National Constitutive Assembly. She's a very intelligent woman with the support of all the people in Venezuela and it's good for us this because also in the diplomatic career the majority of our ministry's of foreign affairs or ambassadors was men, and now no, the participation of the women was increased.
DR. MALKA	It's a big change and I see that trend happening across different countries, I look at the number of female diplomats in South Africa representing their countries and there are a lot.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes, yes also, also South Africa, ja.
DR. MALKA	So given the changes that we've seen in the diplomatic space and the greater

	feminisation of foreign affairs, did you have any gender challenges that you had to overcome during your career?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	No, noactually during my career I have never feltby the fact of being a woman. I feel the challenge is to overcome oneself. I know the first...the second time when I went to Africa to represent my country we went to...to Gambia and before the people say no the president of Gambia...but no. I know maybe before women, a woman, I receive a good.....
DR. MALKA	...welcoming....
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes with welcoming for us in Africa in general, I visit a lot of countries in Africa and I come say no..., no, no, no. Never, never, never...
DR. MALKA	Well I'm very glad to hear that and it just demonstrates I guess also how progressive Venezuela is in terms of how women are represented and what we think about ourselves, so that's a pleasant note. Now Ambassador part of your career was spent in the higher education sector in the faculty of social and economic sciences at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, as well as in the Foreign Affairs Ministry directing international student programmes in Venezuela and you mentioned your role a little earlier in our conversation; you were processing grants with 47 countries, co-ordinating with higher education institutes and as you're aware education is a vital tool to empower individuals as well as societies; can you share with us some of your views on higher education, particularly as a tool in the hands of women to change their lives and also the economy of their society for the better?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Of course the education is the fundamental tool to change the life, not only of women but of anyone. Unfortunately we still live in a very patriarchal world and to compete in the labour market we must train ourselves as professional and demonstrate that we are capable of holding the reigns in any scenario, especially in the areas that are supported man jobs.
DR. MALKA	So ultimately education is a key driver in terms of the betterment of society helping women to achieve more and be sustainable. Now taking into consideration the challenges and successes that women's legal rights have had over the last few years, in your opinion do you believe that 50/50 representation across the board is attainable and what areas do you think still need attention with regards to women's progress?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Of course it is achievable. In Venezuela we have done it, we had a moment in which four or five powers of the state were directed by women, thanks to that we have a feminist president and that it gave much importance to the participation of the women in all theit was even a mandate as president of the government party at that time that the nomination for the national assembly's candidacy was 50/50 and in Venezuela the participation of women has increased a lot asSouth Africa also.
DR. MALKA	Yes, no that's right. For me when I look at this I think part of it has helped because you had a male president but with feminist ideas which shows that it's not all about men with men but it is about understanding what women can contribute and showing that it's right to support so potentially having those feminist views really made a strong impact on society.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes also the participation of women in the army forces was increased, yes.
DR. MALKA	And again so you've got a male...a typically male environment....
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...but by bringing women into those it just shows that women can do what men can

	do and vice versa.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes...
DR. MALKA	You are listening to “Womanity – Women in Unity” on Channel Africa the African Perspective, on frequency 9625 KHz on the 31 meter band, also available on DSTV, Channel 802. Today we’re talking to the ambassador of Venezuela Mairin Moreno. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
	AD BREAK
DR. MALKA	Today we’re talking to the ambassador of Venezuela Mairin Moreno. In the previous segment of the conversation we spoke about some of the Ambassador’s work in terms of her roles and responsibilities, looking at Venezuela’s strong support of education both at school level as well as at university level across the eighteen embassies in Africa; we also spoke about some of the public policies with regards to women and the greater feminisation of the foreign affairs ministry and the benefits of having a feminist president in place in terms of being able to help drive the role and support of women.
DR. MALKA	Ambassador turning towards another aspect of women at work in a way, there was a very interesting study by McKinzie which raises the issue of likability bias saying that success and likability are positively correlated for men but negatively correlated for women, so in other words if a woman is competent she doesn’t seem nice enough, if she seems nice she’s considered less competent and this bias often surfaces in the way in which women are described both in passing and also delivering on their performance reviews, but on the other hand, when a woman asserts herself with confidence she’s often called aggressive, ambitious or out for herself, but when the man does the same thing he’s seen as confident and strong, so as a result of this double standard women often face penalties in the workplace like missing out on being hired or advancement opportunities or salary increases; what’s your opinion on this subject?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Honestly I think it’s a matter of attitude. Respect at work is earned through productivity, honesty and good results and I think that being or not being nice has to do with the personality of each person. The first thing we must do is respect and respect ourselves, unfortunately we live in the world with different cultures, where that is good and normal in my country can be bad orin another countries, we have to be careful about that I think.
DR. MALKA	So it’s balancing, having respect for individuals and also given what you’ve spoken about from a Venezuela perspective equality is there, you’ve achieved equality...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes, Venezuela I can speak about that but we need to be careful to spoke about this in another country, you know.
DR. MALKA	No one subject which often comes up and I’d like to you expand on this a little bit more given some of the conversation we had offline is that the working world was designed what I term as “men’s hours” where we almost lose half of societies best multi-taskers in the workforce because of traditional expectations between women having to reform their work timetables around their families; what’s your view of that?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	I am of the opinion that men and women have the same qualities, what differentiates us is the physical appearance ofthe man is more.....
DR. MALKA	...physically stronger...

AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...physically stronger yes but nothing....we...what we have is that we fight and make our rights With regards to labour reforms, in Venezuela we have many achievements in this regard, women as a working mother has the right and the special protection over.....from the beginning of pregnancy, for example, to two years after childbirth, extend the from one year to two years in the case of adoption of children under three years. The law establish that the worker in anpregnancy will be entitled to a break for six weeks before the birth and twenty weeks later, this includes the mother adopting a child under the age of three years. The father's.....is extended to two years after the birth of the son or daughter and the father's birth certificate of forty days is collected, both establish in the law on the protection of family, maternity and paternity. It is indicated that a worker or worker who was a child, daughter or more with a disability or illness that prevents or hinder him or herself from being self employed shall be protect or protected from permanent incapacity for work in accordance with the law. As you can see we have already made some restructuring in this regard, not only in favour of the woman, but in favour of all the family in general.
DR. MALKA	And something else that you mentioned which I thought was very interesting was about the kindergarten facilities; can you tell us more about that?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes the ministries in Venezuela is obligatory have a kindergarten for the children, especially if a mother have a baby they arrange all facilities to you baby stay close you and also the mothers.....
DR. MALKA	...breastfeeding....
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes breastfeeding have two hours...permits for two hours in the morning and two hours afternoon to....
DR. MALKA	...to breastfeed...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes to breastfeed the baby.
DR. MALKA	So it's a very, I would almost say, children friendly society...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes...
DR. MALKA	...you also mentioned that when people attending universities that they can bring their children with as well...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, also, you can go the university with the baby because it's normal, you like woman just to have baby, why do you can't go to university if you didn't have any person to....
DR. MALKA	...to look after the child...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, yes....
DR. MALKA	So I think it's very enabling and it means that the state is helping to provide the support structure to enable people to work for the state....
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...ja...
DR. MALKA	...to have those economic benefits. What would be your advice to all the women who find themselves torn between traditional and cultural expectations of them as women, as mothers, doing their own personal needs like gaining an academic education or building a professional career?

AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	We can do everything. A woman we can do everything. We must only propose and have the will to do what we want. Family is very important and the support of your husband is fundamental in the development of your professional career especially when you hold position of great responsibility since this takes more time than normal, no, but we must learn to balance the thing of the order to divide responsibility at home and above all to separate the time to share with the family and fortunately I have a husband to support me in every moment that I need him, ja.
DR. MALKA	And that's....you're living proof of being able to achieve the success by having the right support behind you.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Ja.
DR. MALKA	One of the things that I always find interesting is about time management because I look at you for example and the things that you're doing, time management is a really important piece, so can you share with us some of your time management secrets on how to build a professional career, raise family and still find time to serve your community?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Like I tell you before, we need separate the time work and the times of the family. Fortunately my husband support me in every moment, in the embassy our husbands they can't work officially in the embassy but in my case he always work with us in the embassy and support me and also he support me in the....with my son and in all activities that we have he go with me to prepare any activity that we have inside the embassy or outside in the embassy and I think the family is...the support of the family is very important and I have this, fortunately I have the support of my family and also my mother in the moment when I need her because I'm travelling a lot, they stay with me because they understand that this is my career, my dream and my work.
DR. MALKA	And I think what you said there is also important, the fact that we make our careers, we make our dreams happen with other people around us, they're that support structure to do that.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes.
DR. MALKA	Now one of the questions that I ask my guests on this programme who've all made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about the factors that have contributed to their success, so some people speak about hard work, others talk about perseverance, in your opinion what have been some of the key drivers to your success?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Of course the work and perseverance are essentials to success but you have to like what you do because if you don't know.....you'll never be successful. You have to do something that makes you happy. You need work in.....
DR. MALKA	...like a passion...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	...yes, yes, my, yes it's very important that. My maternal....my grandmother inspired me a lot, she was a hard working a hard working woman and even though she didn't study because in that moment Venezuela was...and I secondall her children.....all her children eight, she gave birth...
DR. MALKA	...eight children...
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Eight and many other that she raised. I remember four/five, more, she helped to go to the store to do everything, I have more than twenty....my mother have more yes, many, many, many, many children grow in my grandmother house. I remember my family was big, always and she was very essential in my decision to study, she always tell me you need do honesty, study one career

	that you like. If you don't like the numbers don't study economy nothing because you don't have.....in your career.
DR. MALKA	So choose one thing that you're going to excel on and own it.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Ja, yes.
DR. MALKA	Clearly your grandmother was a very strong influence in your life. What would you say has been the best lesson that you've learned throughout your career?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Okay the values instilled by my family I could say that this had a profound influence on my personal and professional world I tell you. The love, honesty, responsibility, the loyalty and humanity they are fundamental values that we must have to reach out to those who need us, to give without expecting anything in return.
DR. MALKA	Those are important family values.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Yes, this is the more important I think, the value that you have, yes.
DR. MALKA	And I always see that there's a difference between the emotional component and functional with emotion being driven by your values; your essence of who you are. Ambassador we are coming to the end of the programme today, if I can please ask you to close out by sharing a few words of inspiration or words of wisdom which you'd like to pass onto young women who are listening to us today?
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Okay. Women, girls, always strive for the dreams...for your dreams. Don't no let anything or anyone cut your wings. We can all achieve our goals, we must only be constant, responsible and honest; this is my message for them.
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much, it's been a pleasure talking to you today to spread the message from Venezuela and all of the commitments that it has to women, it's been very inspiring for me to hear the successes of the country so thank you for joining us.
AMBASSADOR MAIRIN MORENO	Thank you very much, thank you very much for invitation Amaleya.
	PROGRAMME END.