

PROGRAM DATE: 2017-09-28

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: HIGH COMMISSIONER JEAN NJERI KAMAU – KENYA HIGH COMMISSIONER TO REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND

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 High Commissioner Jean Njeri Kamau who joined the Kenya High Commission to South Africa in February 2015. Ambassador Kamau has worked across both the private and public sector. Some of her previous roles include serving as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Kenya to Washington DC; being the first Executive Director of both the Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya between 1992 to 2000 and the National Public Complaints Standing Committee between 2007 to 2008. She has consulted on the security sector reforms in the Ministry of Internal Security and Provisional Administration and worked for several international agencies. On the academic side she holds two masters degrees, one in law from Aberdeen University in Scotland and the second in democratic studies from Leeds University from the United Kingdom. Welcome to the show High Commissioner!
HC KAMAU	Thank you so much Dr. Malka.
DR. MALKA	High Commissioner, you are the High Commissioner of Kenya to the Republic of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland; can you share with us some of the work that you do as well as the responsibilities that come with holding this position?
HC KAMAU	Well being a diplomat representing the Republic of Kenya means that my first overall responsibility is building bilateral relations between the three countries that I'm accredited to and by building bilateral relations means that seeing to it that the relationships between Kenya and South Africa and between Kenya and Lesotho, Kenya and Swaziland are at an optimum level that we have common understanding on issues that are important to our two countries; there's a good promotion of trade issues between our two countries, that the people to people relationships between our two nations are you know at a good level, that there's an exchange of culture, education and just prosperity and good business activity going on. So it's a very involving role, you have to you know manage resources, manage people, deliver on strategic plans that are developed by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kenya and see to it that the goals of our national interests are attained and achieved through the bilateral relations, so it's a lot of meetings, negotiations, holding events, you know, for example since I've been here for the last three years we've had several important trade events going on between Kenya and South Africa which we've organised here and very well received and attended by the private sector for example and the public sector from South Africa and similar initiatives go on in the other two countries I serve. So you know it's engaging, it's a very fulfilling job, I would say that, representing one's country is really an honourable position and something that I'm very pleased and honoured to be doing for my country. So you know just to emphasise that it's really about building bilateral relations and that's making sure that Kenya's own national interests find a way within our relationships with South Africa, ja.

DR. MALKA	What would you say have been some of the most significant trade initiatives?
HC KAMAU	I think one of the most important things is to build an understanding, what is it that is possible for Kenya to trade with in South Africa and similarly for South Africa what is the trade opportunity in Kenya and the Business Trade Investment Forums that we've had have been about creating a better understanding of what is possible, what is available, what's the regulatory framework, what's the trade policy between the two countries so that you create an enabling environment for business to thrive. Currently the trading balance between....there's a trading balance between Kenya and South Africa; heavily on South Africa's advantage and that's understandable because South Africa is a more advanced economy in terms of production, it's...you know it's industrialised and it's had a much strong...you know the size of the economy is also bigger, so there's a lot to learn from the South African economy that we need in Kenya to also build and grow our economy. So the you know trade remains really a cornerstone of our bilateral work because South Africa imports into Kenya quite...on a higher side than our own imports into South Africa and we want to find a level playing ground where there's a better trade balance between the two countries and there's more trade technology transfer and better cooperation around trade issues that will then boost trade between our two countries.
DR. MALKA	On that point of trade technology, we know that Kenya is renowned for its innovations in the tech space, we looked at how IMPESA for instance took the world by storm; is there any work that is happening in that environment from a technology point of view of being able to import some of those values and opportunities into the South African context or else, where?
HC KAMAU	I think there's always room for technology transfer between Kenya and South Africa. I think there's been a lot of interest in how IMPESA has completely revolutionised the way we transact in the financial services and it's interesting to know that some South African banks that do business in Kenya are also benefitting from the IMPESA platform, for example Standard Bank, Stanbic Bank which are you know they do retail banking in Kenya and so their own experience on how IMPESA pushes financial inclusivity that more people are able to have access to financial services we'd hope that that expertise and that technology then gets transferred into their own banking network, not just in South Africa, but in the southern region because these are dominant brands in the banking sector. So I think that's one way where you know we can see that there's a real opportunity that they can be learning through one aspect of business.
DR. MALKA	It's a great cross-pollination and I think that when you've got opportunities to give rather than starting from ground zero, it makes more sense.
HC KAMAU	It does.
DR. MALKA	In your role what would you say have been some of the greatest challenges?
HC KAMAU	You know within diplomacy there are always challenges, things change all the time, you know, you could wake up today and find for example one of your country's products has been banned from entering the market and you have to work around those issues, why the ban and negotiate to have the ban lifted so that the commodity can come so there can be pressure from home, can you resolve this issue as quickly as possible, the host country where you're posted has its own national interests to defend and to protect. So those are just some....that's just an example that within diplomacy you're always challenged to safeguard your national interests, to look out for the interests of your country and to position that in a diplomatic way and how to do that needs, you know, negotiating, talking,

	<p>deliberating and sometimes working under immense pressure. But it's a very exciting area to work in because you know you have to have very good people skills, you have to be out there, be known, be articulate, be knowledgeable about what you are saying, be very clear on what your arguments are and why they're important and to persuade people that you have a reasonable case in point and you have a position that's important for....and to push not just for you know....a win/win kind of scenario where everybody feels at the end of the day they've benefitted, you know, so those are some of the challenges, you find yourself within diplomacy working within very demanding spaces that require you to really think, you know, you really have to bring out the best in yourself and look back and look into yourself for how you're going to get the best optimal solution in difficult situations and even sometimes it can be a simple consular issue you know to do with whether somebody can come in or out of the country and you can get a call at very strange times of the day or night...</p>
DR MALKA	...I'm sure...
HC	<p>...but you know this is what comes....but on the other hand there are also very exciting times when you go beyond the challenge and celebrate a milestone and I think for us having a state visit by President Zuma come to Kenya, which was the first ever by a South African president was again a very significant milestone for the bilateral relationships between Kenya and South Africa.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Certainly something to be proud of and to add to your acclaimed list of records and achievements. Now our programme "Womanity – Women in Unity" is all about gender equality and obviously during the conversation we will highlight some of those important issues; one of the things that I'd like to ask you and given your legal framework is what are your perspectives regarding women empowerment and gender equality legislation?</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>Amaleya this is...the area around women's empowerment, women's rights is something I have been working on throughout my career and I think living as a young woman in university and then starting work; my first job was working in a women's rights organisation and that calling, you know, working in that space was really as a response to the level of discrimination that Kenyan women experienced in the early 90's. We were second class citizens for all purposes and intent, we could not give...transfer citizenship to our children because it was...if you were married for example to a foreigner your children automatically took the identity of their father, not yours....</p>
DR. MALKAso they were totally denied the rights of the mother as a citizen....
HC KAMAU	<p>...ja, if you were married....especially if you were married to a foreigner it was automatic that they couldn't claim citizenship. So we came from a very difficult environment and you know learning that living and working in a country which called itself and labelled itself a democracy yet women didn't have any equal status, they were denied equal citizenship, they were denied you know just the basic rights to claim entitlement to citizenship was a key rallying point for a lot of the activism that took place in the 90's and leading up to the promulgation of a new constitution in 2010, that was finally resolved but it took a long time, it took many years of activism and to put the issue across the table and we're not there yet, you know, now we have equal citizenship but even access to political power still remains heavily contested. We've just had an election where only 23 women were elected to parliament....</p>
DR. MALKA	...and what is the proportion?

HC KAMAU	We have 290 members of parliament....
DR. MALKAso not even 10%...
HC KAMAU	..ja okay 47 women are nominated, we have special seats for women so 47 women are elected on special seats, we've got 47 but the women who contest outside the 47 seats is still a very you know 23 out of...if you remove the 47 it's still a signific...it's very low and in the previous parliament only 16 got elected so now we're 23 and so it's a marginal increase in having women elected to parliament and you know a lot of the problems again stem from how well you are treated within your political party, whether the nomination rules support women getting through equally, you know, the male candidates where the political parties have a strong support for women candidates. So the journey for women to get equal treatment, equal access and to really be equal citizens within the country is an on-going journey and it's a struggle and I strongly believe that democracies have to live to the tag of equality by demonstrating that truly women are equal citizenships, they have equal access to political power, they're treated with dignity and you know and not discriminated against, I think that's really important and that's been my life journey and my life commitment that this is a mission that's very dear to me and I continue to, you know, just to keep myself abreast of what's happening and I just noticed you know that it's very slow progress. We're getting there but it could be better you know, the political environment and not just Kenya in different countries needs to get to continuously be monitored and improved.
DR. MALKA	That is certainly food for thought and from what I've encountered in the various interviews that we've had and the conversations is that once you get to a certain point you have to keep going, you can't become almost complacent and say we're here now, you've got to keep pushing to drive the agenda otherwise it dissipates. What would you say have been some of the challenges that you have experienced gender wise during your career?
HC KAMAU	You know some...career progression in...whether in the public or the private space for women it just continues to be very contested. You never, as you've said it's never....the work never finishes, you know, you're always constantly looking and assessing how, you know, any space you're in are you treated equally, is the opportunity the same for you as your male counterparts, how is promotion move you know, is it....are the rules and procedures applied equally to you and your counterparts. When you go for interviews the kinds of questions you're asked, and these are the realities and it never and it's interesting even sometimes when you have a woman who's your boss you still go through the same kind of interrogations as....
DR. MALKA	...and I think because she's gone through those interrogations herself it's like a normalised....the wrong norm is being normalised.
HC KAMAU	Ja it's contin.....so it's....and I think the lesson is here is you can't....you always have to be on your guard, you have to be consistent in also the message that you send out on what your own principles are in terms of women's leadership and to always challenge you know any effort to undermine women's capabilities because it's always there, it's you know it's....if you go for...the higher you go up in any organisation you're going to meet certain barriers and patriarchy you know it manifests itself in so many ways because that's been the dominant way of doing things in both the public and the private. But that said, you know we've seen some changes, you'll find that I think affirmative action has really significantly opened up spaces for women and part of the activism we had in our own country and I think even globally was that affirmative action was a principle that needed to be enshrined because it would help women....it

	would accelerate the movement of women into public spaces and leadership opportunities. So we've seen the benefit which is reflected in legislation, we get more women in and that helps to bring some balance and bring some perspectives, not always positive, I mean we've had scenarios where women have occupied spaces created by affirmative action and actually done nothing for the women's movement where on the other hand we've had women who have entered those spaces and really stretched the opportunity so that others could come in or created new understanding of what it means to have women enter into leadership spaces. So, you know, so that's something again that is important to highlight.
DR. MALKA	And within the affirmative action initiatives in Kenya are those instituting quotas within organisations, what are some of the dynamics there?
HC KAMAU	Ja well we have a rule that for example in our parliament there should not be, you know, the two thirds rule in terms of representation, it's not yet fully realised within the National Assembly....
DR. MALKA	...so we are saying 30% towards women.....?
HC KAMAU	...yes....towards any....
DR. MALKA	...either....
HC KAMAU	...either gender ja so...
DR. MALKA	...okay...
HC KAMAU	...and in some...in government boards again the two thirds rule applies. In the public sector I know there was a call for at least 50%, so there are all these public policies that are in place to promote that accessibility of leadership.
DR. MALKA	So in terms of legislation things like affirmative action, do you think that legislation can help reduce some of the gender gaps, whether it is in pay, because globally women are on average earning 23% less than their male counterparts, or promotion like you mentioned career progression and then position, whether that is in leadership in government or in other sectors of society?
HC KAMAU	I think it does, I think legislation is important as a tool of entering the public policy dimension and saying you know this is now public policy by law that we will have to have x amount of women access this kind of leadership role, you know, look at the whole issue around women's unpaid labour which is very contentious but you know we are so proud to say well you know 80% of the labour in the agriculture sector is contributed by women, but are those women paid?
DR. MALKA	...paid....do they have ownership of the land....
HC KAMAUof the land....
DR. MALKA	...that they're working....?
HC KAMAU	...ja so working backward you can see it's a very good statistic to say that women do provide but it's free labour, it's not quantified even within our own economic frameworks and that's a place where legislation hasn't... hasn't kept up with a lot of these areas of discrimination. I think it....and the whole campaign around recognising women's unpaid labour as contributing to the overall GDP is very.... I think is a first step because it then acknowledges that it's not free labour it's household labour in small scale farms or otherwise but it has a significant contribution to the overall GDP of our country and how about recognising women and giving a number or some legislative recognition of what that contribution really means in terms of acknowledging that is a labour and also how then do we give back, you know, use it as a way of giving back...and I think it's...I don't have, you know it's an area of research, it's an area of concern, it's an area of discussion but that's just an example that if we did have good

	legislation in that area we could save....you know we could really recognise women's rule.
DR. MALKA	And I think beyond the legislation piece there's also implementing legislation because legislation can be fantastic in black and white, but there's another point in terms of taking it to market and having people action it. Another area within the equality space, particularly what I find more so from an African context and you already touched on patriarchy, which in Kenya and South Africa and many of the other countries that are on our continent is a real concern, but gender equality touches on sensitive points of culture, religion, tradition; how do you think, or do you think it would be possible to overcome these points for the sake of women's development?
HC KAMAU	You know the whole issue around culture, tradition and also religion, it's very contentious because it touches on the personal, you know, women's personal lives and I think one of the stands we had as young activists was that "if it discriminates against women, it's no good for women" that's the bottom line. If it's a religious rule that demands women's subordination and exclusion....
DR. MALKA	...it's almost used to justify what people do which is wrong...
HC KAMAU	...ja then it's not good for women so every culture.... all these you know culture/religion it has to be measured against the scale of is it good, does it promote women's rights, no/yes and we have to use that, okay we also have to be sensitive about the role of you know the three areas culture, religion and tradition in everyday life but again they cannot be used as an excuse to subordinate and keep women in a situation where they live as second class citizens, I think that's really the issue here, and that's the...if it's no good for women then really we have to test that and see whether its promoting or not.
DR. MALKA	And I also think it's as much about educating and promoting amongst women so that they know what their rights are, they know what their opportunities are, but at the same time also educating our men folk that this is the way that women should be perceived and they need to have access to these opportunities.
HC KAMAU	Ja and that...it requires a national policy around that because you need a strong public education component that does exactly that, that educates the whole community about why women's rights are so important and why every woman, you know, safeguarding women's rights ensures that communities live with dignity because everybody's...and promoting the idea of equality and supporting...why women should be supported it's everybody's responsibility, not just women, so you know I agree on that and that it has to come out of a strong public commitment and a public education and we need to see more of that going on because women shouldn't be left to burden the shoulder of women's empowerment on their own, there has to be a responsibility on everybody.
DR. MALKA	Very important points.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to the High Commissioner of Kenya to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland Miss Jean Njeri Kamau
	AD BREAK
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.
DR.MALKA	Today we are talking to the High Commissioner of Kenya to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, Jean Njeri Kamau. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter:@WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment of the conversation the High Commissioner spoke about her work as a high commissioner and the responsibilities that this entails,

	<p>formulating bilateral relations between the three different countries that she's responsible for, looking at issues of trade, people, culture and education. We also spoke at length about the rights that women have earned in Kenya and one of the lines that the High Commissioner mentioned which I'd like to repeat is that "democracy needs to live up to the tag of equality". High Commissioner continuing with the gender topic that we were on in the previous segment of the show, building female leadership capacity is important for the future of women and to our countries as well as continents; Malawi and Liberia represent two countries in Africa in recent history to have had a female president, how do you see female leadership in Africa?</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>I think there's been a gradual improvement in women's leadership over the last probably what, ten/twenty years? I think we've seen more confidence in women to seek political leadership and there's more acceptance that women can aspire and lead and get support to become heads of state and I think you know the example you've given of Liberia and Malawi confirm that and if you look across the board there've also been more women candidates presenting themselves for presidential elections, which is a good development, you know I think in Angola, also in Kenya we've had women present themselves as candidates in different elections in Rwanda recently. So that's a good development it just shows that women are ready to take up that challenge and that's good. What we're also seeing again is even at the level...not just the president it can come up at the level of the vice president as well, ministers, so there's been an upward development in that area and although we've had only two, probably in the next decade we're going to have more women taking up heads of state level.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>It would be good to see and apart from women being ready personally it's also that the public is ready to receive female....</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>...absolutely and you know we just had...</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...leadership...</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>...a woman led the Africa Union Commission...</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...of course...</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>...and you know we could end up having a woman president here...</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>...we could indeed...</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>...so there're all these opportunities which speak to the...I think that's a really progressive development for our continent and for the individual countries that have come through with this kind of leadership, very impressive.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And turning now more towards a personal perspective, I noticed that you owned two masters degrees, one in law from Aberdeen University and the second in democratic studies from Leeds University. Higher education and training play a vital role in the economy of every country to build up skilled individuals who go on and make meaningful contributions to society, one challenge though is that the world is developing more rapidly than we've got time to revise and update our education curricula; how do you think we can develop our capabilities for the future to overcome this type of gap?</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>First of all I think the whole issue around just access to education is we still need to improve access to education generally, I think let's just even start with that because...and technology allows us to improve the access to education, you know, it's the choice of whether we're going to...what kind of...how we're going to use the access to technology that's available now to ensure that there's more inclusivity and access for everybody who needs to have the basic education and to do that again by legislation I think it's really fundamental that basic education - high school - accessible through public funding that it's free and accessible, I think that's one way of...and</p>

	we've just come through that kind of policy change in Kenya because...
DR. MALKA	...and the quality too...
HC KAMAU	...and then the quality, so once you've got everybody in the room or through some mechanism of learning then the quality must be there to ensure that they all graduate, have access to the same quality education and they all graduate knowing that they all had the same type of access to the curriculum and the tools of learning, that's, you know, that's another big area of concern. But I think just overcoming the challenges that you know that you've just highlighted that you know technology is really something that is going to help our continent move forward in a very progressive way and we don't have to go through a long trend of development we can just shift our thinking, shift our policy frameworks, embrace what technology makes available to us and the opportunity and ensure that future generations are able to leap forward on a much stronger platform so that you know the continent can develop. So I think the learning and the reflection on previous efforts needs to always happen so that we see where we're coming from and what opportunities are there for the future.
DR. MALKA	And to continue advancing.
HC KAMAU	Exactly, ja.
DR. MALKA	One of the questions that I ask all my guests on this programme who've made tremendous achievements in their respective fields of expertise is about the factors that have contributed to their success. Some people speak about hard work others talk about perseverance or particular people who've made a big impression and impact on their lives; what in your opinion have been some of the key drivers to your success?
HC KAMAU	Okay I couldn't discount hard work but I think networking is absolutely...it's invaluable in terms of helping you to learn, to continuously grow your knowledge base and through networking to appreciate others experience and what useful lessons you can draw from them. In my career I've met so many people because I've travelled quite a bit and it's always good to reflect about somebody you've met and you know what you learned about that person's own life journey and where you...the two of you connected whether it was a workshop, it was a meeting, it was....it could be you know whatever opportunity brought the two of you together and what the two of you at that point your lives had been through and that those networks then in future become valuable to share with other people. So I think networking is invaluable and something that we always have to....and you can't change the world alone, you need....you need a group, you need people to do that and having a strong network helps you have access to you know resources and learning's again and knowledge that takes you to another level and I think just always challenging oneself, not to be easily satisfied and aspire for more and better things and not to be afraid of a new challenge and not to stay in....I think one of the best things I think in my life is don't stay in one job for too long, keep moving 'cause if you stay in one place you get too comfortable and you're not going to challenge yourself.
DR. MALKA	I think there's an expression which says something like "the rolling stone gathers no moths"...
HC KAMAU	..."gathers no moths", there you go, so that's something I've learned, ja.
DR. MALKA	Can you share with us some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up?
HC KAMAU	Um ooh there are many. I think maybe the ones which are significant would be transition points in my life. I think taking up new challenges has always been very important like changing careers, moving from I think for me moving from the civil society to public space was quite....was something phenomenal because it's a different space, different learning opportunity.

	<p>Probably milestones in women's legislation and I think finally seeing a constitutional moment when we knew that we had made a major leap as a country, so what that constitution meant for women was important because then you think wow you know it's taken 40 years plus to get where we are and what does that mean for the rest of...you know just I can think you know those are dates that you don't forget or how you felt at that moment and of course, you know my son, I have one child so who's again, you know, his coming into my life and the moments seeing him grow have been awesome moments and he's been part and parcel of my career because I've always taken my child with me everywhere, I think that's something as women we do, we don't leave your....we carry our life and our families with us and I think that there are many moments but of course what's important is where you see a transition or a change, not just in your own life but in your own community, has been significant.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And who would you say have been some of the most important women in your life or key influences?</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>Believe it or not my teachers in high school and especially in high school were very key. Some very important in the women's movement as well, one of whom is...she's from Swaziland called Dr. Pat McFadden was one of my early teachers in life as a young woman in my activist days. Graca Machel, I've always felt very inspired by her in the women's movement, there are quite a number of women but those two come to mind also because also because they are from this region and maybe also the listeners with also resonate with them. Of course my mother has been a really significant role model for me, ja.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And lastly as we come to the end of the show can you please share a few words of wisdom or inspiration that you'd like to pass onto young women, girls that are listening to us today?</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>Oh great. I think I'll just say a few things I've learned in my own life. I think first of all you must have a good education. When I was pursuing my own university education I remember somebody saying it's the one thing nobody can take away from you. Nobody can take away your degrees from you but they can take you places so you know a good education is so important. Secondly nobody can tell you what you can't do; you decide what you can and can't do. Nobody should tell you you can't do something. If you want to become..I mean run for political office, you want to head an organisation, whatever you want to do you can do it, you just have to have to set...have a plan, you just need your own personal plan you know and you're well equipped with your education and you have a plan where you're going to take your career and you will get....that's exactly what you are going to achieve and never give up and just keep the faith in yourself and in the community you come from.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thank you so much.</p>
HC KAMAU	<p>You're welcome.</p>
<p>PROGRAMME END</p>	