

**PROGRAM DATE: 2018-03-29**

**PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY**

**GUEST NAME: MS ULLA TØRNAES - MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION OF DENMARK**

<b>SPEAKER</b>	<b>TRANSCRIPTION</b>
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 on the line from Denmark today is the Minister for Development Co-Operation of Denmark, Ulla Tørnæs. She is a member of the Liberal Party; she has previously served as Minister of Science, Technology, Information and Higher Education; she was Minister for Development of Co-Operation from February 2005 to February 2010 previously, she was also Minister for Education and she was a member of the Danish Parliament for 20 years, from 1994 through to 2014. She was a member of the European Parliament for the Liberal Party from July 2014 to February 2016; she is also a ministerial champion of <i>She Decides</i> which is a global movement for women and girls to safely exercise their rights to decide what they want to do with their bodies. Welcome to the show Minister!
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>Thank you very much. Thank you.</b>
DR. MALKA	Minister to start off, with the introduction that I just gave maps out aspects of your career in politics; can you please share with us what influenced your decision to enter the political arena?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>Oh this is really hard to point at one single thing that paved my way to politics but I'm born in a politically active family and of course I'm influenced by the fact that different political issues have always been discussed at the dinner table or in my family, so I think I have been, how can I say, influenced by my childhood and my family but what actually was the most or what I can point at is that I know that you can have a voice if you enter into politics and I also know that you can have influence when you enter into politics, so I was running for candidate and I was so happy to be elected for parliament at the age of 32, so this was in way or the other, my way to join Danish National Politics. I was before this active in international youth politics; I was a Vice President of the International Federation of Liberal Youth so I was involved in a lot of different youth activities, both at national and international level.</b>
DR. MALKA	So it was a case of joining the family business, as it were....
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>...(laughs) I wouldn't really call it a family business but you know very often loyal sons and daughters they tend to follow the line of the father or the mother and this happened also to be the case for me. My father was also a politician and politics and especially politics of the Liberal Party has always meant a lot to my family but it's not so that I have inherited the position, not at all.</b>
DR. MALKA	But I think as you said, some of those aspects are that you know that you've got a voice if you enter into politics and also the influence, so being able to manifest an intention and see a difference and a change in the world. You mentioned that prior to your election at 32 you were actively involved in youth politics at a local level as well as an international level; can you tell us a little bit of the highlights in your journey so far?

<p><b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b></p>	<p>When I was involved in international youth politics it happened to be during the Cold War where Europe was divided with the wall and in '89 when I was Vice President of the Liberal Federation of Youth the wall was teared down by the people in Germany and in Europe and this was really a milestone in my, how can I say, political journey that showed me then that when we work together for a common goal we can also achieve this goal and the people of Germany together with Europe as such, we wanted a one and common Europe that could work together and we managed to reach this in 1989. This seems to be so long time ago but it was when I was young and was part of a youth political movement in Europe.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>And you've been involved in several movements as we go across and we'll enter that into the discussion a little bit later. Looking at Denmark in particular, it's well known for aid programmes across Africa; can you tell us about some of the development programmes that your country is currently involved in concerning Africa and also if there are any specific programmes which have been structured around women's development?</p>
<p><b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b></p>	<p>We have a lot of different initiatives and projects structured around women and empowerment of women because this is a gender, it's an issue that is very close to my heart and I think it's because I have the privilege of having the right to decide over my own life and by this also the possibility of doing what I really, I mean feel like doing. I...in my country I do not experiences any differences between men and women in terms of rights or in terms of possibilities and when I the first time became the Minister for Development Co-Operation back in 2005 I very quickly experienced that the privilege that I'm having is not the case for millions of women and girls around the world so I decided that I would fight for the women and girls that do not share the same rights as I to make sure that their voices are heard and I have access to both the UN and other political forums where this should be said. So I decided that this is a key priority in Danish Development Co-Operation; to express the voice of the millions of women and girls who do not have access to express their voices where it should be heard at the highest political level. So this means that in the implementation of Danish Development Co-Operation we have a strong focus on empowerment of women, both from a rights base perspective but also from an economic perspective because all analysis shows us that it makes good sense, it's good economic empowerment of not just women, when we work with women, but of whole societies. So a lot of different projects across the African continent is focusing on girls and women and it's being from both access to primary school for girls and to make sure that the girls are also continuing in school and are staying in school as well as economic empowerment in terms of access to micro-credits or others and I've had the possibility and the privilege to visit many different projects where Denmark was sometimes a very small contribution can make a huge difference for the women that we are partnering with.</p>
<p>DR. MALKA</p>	<p>So the key elements are education, which is bringing in youth, ensuring that they've got the skills, that they are literate and then the second component is about access to finance and helping them drive through on an economic level to sustain their businesses.</p>
<p><b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b></p>	<p>This is just to mention two important issues. Education is a very important priority, not just for Denmark but for other partners as well, and when I visit African families that we work together with, they always mention that education, education of my children is absolutely key, it's one of the most important things, that we make sure that there is access to education for the children and especially that we make sure that the girls, that they stay</p>

	<b>in school.</b>
DR. MALKA	And education is one thing that cannot be taken away from anyone; once you have it, you have it.
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>Mmmm, exactly.</b>
DR. MALKA	And the importance of staying in school is also, you know, that leads me to another point of conversation and that's about increased access to facilities of ablution facilities, so ensuring that girls have got the right sanitary measures because that's often one of the biggest issues that when they're menstruating, when they are in rural schools or schools that don't have adequate facilities, they simply don't attend.
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>But this I mean being a woman myself, I perfectly understand if you do not have access to good sanitary facilities, I mean you hide away and by this you do not get access to the education that you need or you do not get access to the different social activities that is of course...is important. So access to sanitary facilities as well as access to family planning is another key issue in our development co-operation. Access to family planning is as I see it getting more and more important with things going on around us, it's important for me to underline that the right for women and girls to decide over their own bodies is very important.</b>
DR. MALKA	And whilst we're on the topic of family planning, I recall from 2016 that Women Deliver hosted the world's largest conference on health rights and wellbeing of girls and women in the last decade and that took place in Copenhagen in Denmark and Denmark has been an avid supporter of the She Decides Movement and you yourself are one of the ministerial champions in this initiative and I must say from a South African perspective we were privileged that the movement celebrated its first year anniversary here a few weeks ago. So firstly could you share with our listeners what the She Decides Movement is all about?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>What is the She Decides Movement about? Yeah for me it's a movement that first of all is a strong political voice that express views that women's rights are basic human rights and therefore women's rights should of course be respected and this means that girls and women should have the right to decide over their own body. This means they should decide when they want to have sex, with whom they want to have sex and by this also when they want to have children and how many children they want to have and to make sure that women have possibilities of contributing to the economic development in her society. It makes a huge difference whether you are getting pregnant at the age of 12/14/16 years without finishing your school, or you get pregnant at the age of maybe 18/20 or even older. Of course it makes a difference of your possibilities of contributing to the economic development. So I am absolutely in favour of making sure that women and girls do have access to contraception so that they can protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies. So this is what the She Decides Movement is about; it's about a strong political voice making sure that the rights of the women and girls are respected and then to make sure that there is access to family planning and the last thing has become very important because the Trump Administration in the US has withdrawn their economic contributions to family planning. They have banned organisations that work with family planning so this means that partners that believe that women's rights are basic human rights, we try to stay together in the She Decides Movement wanting the partners that agree with what I've just said to try to fill the gap that the US is leaving to make sure that the two hundred and twelve million women around the world who do</b>

	<b>not have access to family planning or contraception, that they are not left behind.</b>
DR. MALKA	Two hundred and twelve million women, that is an enormous quantity that would be destitute in some ways if they don't have access to family planning and I understand that last year there was a target to make up the deficit of the US funding being depleted of around about six hundred million US dollars; is that still the case that needs to be made up?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>This we are of course heading for but I personally believe that the strong political voice is very important, we have just had the conference on the status of women at the UN in New York and it's very important that we stay together so that the...that the outcome document is having a strong text on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. So the strong political voice that the She Decides Movement is constituting is very important, as well is of course our efforts to try to fill the financing gap that the US Administration has left but this is of course not easy and it is also being discussed how big this gap actually is and some are mentioning amounts like nine billion US dollars and this is of course...it just shows how important this is and it for me also shows that it was a very sad decision that was taken by the US Administration.</b>
DR. MALKA	I agree with you there. You'd mentioned the strong political voice being developed out of the She Decides Movement; I think political voice is one thing but how can the public take some responsibility? How can they help push the movement forward because that just offers another dynamic where people have gotten opportunities to own some of the responsibility?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>If you agree with the She Decides Movement's idea that of course women's rights are basic human rights and they should be respected and therefore we are fighting for women to have access to family planning and we are also fighting against early marriages and so on and so forth, and if you as an individual agree with this, you can go on the website, on the She Decides website and you can sign the manifesto. More than 40,000 individuals have done this so far and the more people signing the manifesto the stronger political voice we actually can express when there is a need for a strong political voice to be expressed at the UN for example.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thanks for informing us on how the public can be involved and we will definitely put notes and alerts on the twitter posts and social media of the She Decides various URL's and handles.
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>Thank you for this, this is very important, I mean when we work together and when we stay together expressing these views I think we can move forward in the fight for the millions of women who do not share the same rights as I am privileged to share.</b>
DR. MALKA	Well in a way I'm reminiscing on what you said from being with the Berlin Wall during the Cold War on how to bring partners together for an ideology which everyone shares and to try and spread that word.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to the Minister of the Development Co-Operation of Denmark, Ulla Tørnæs. We would love to receive your comments on Twitter: @WomanityTalk.
DR. MALKA	In the previous segment of the conversation Minister shared some of her history, her journey into politics. We also spoke about some of the elements concerning Denmark's aide to various countries with a strong emphasis on education and helping to finance women in developed markets and lastly we spoke about the She Decides Movement which is ultimately a significant venture in terms of family planning on a global scale with a philosophy of "Women's Rights are Human Rights" and Minister Tørnæs also spoke about the opportunity for the public to get involved by signing the She Decides Manifesto. Minister Tørnæs

	<p>when we last left off we were talking about finance and due to the fact that this programme is all about gender equality and women's empowerment is increasingly a global focus, you're a member of the World Bank's Group Advisory Council on Women's Economic Empowerment which provides a guidance on this important subject and also on the implementation of gender equality as smart economics. Can you briefly tell us a little bit more about the council, what it aims to achieve, what have been some of its successes?</p>
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<p><b>The Council is a fantastic opportunity for me as Minister for Development Co-Operation to try to influence one of our bigger partners in Development Co-Operation namely the World Bank and I'm trying to share my experiences on what we are working within the few and so it's a sharing of experiences as well as it is a very, very good platform for networking for me and then ja, as I said to influence the different programmes in the World Bank to make sure that he World Bank is always having a strong focus on gender equality and empowerment of women and now and then we manage to also set up specific facilities targeted women as the new facility that We-Fi, which is about women entrepreneurs; what the World Bank can do to support women entrepreneurs in the developing countries to make sure that they have access to financing and to make sure that they also have access to counselling and coaching so that their ideas can hopefully fly and become big businesses and create job and possibilities for their societies.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>When you talk about financing, is that access to almost a fund that is developed and contributed to by the World Bank, or is there funding in local markets?</p>
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<p><b>It can be both, the Wi-Fi is about access to capital to banking to make sure that the projects are bankable and we all know that it is in some countries it's not possible for female entrepreneurs to go to the bank and get a loan so it's...I mean it's both, we're working with both...both at the smaller scale like access to micro-finance but the Wi-Fi is more how do we get access to capital to make sure that the project is bankable. We also work along the same line with the African Development Bank that is also very much aware of the fact that many female entrepreneurs they have difficulties in getting finance or financing their investments.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And how would women apply to access the funding or to look at the components of coaching and counselling?</p>
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<p><b>To become of the Wi-Fi, to apply for the Wi-Fi, I am not quite sure the way through but if there should be someone listening I would just recommend to go on the World Bank's website and look for the Wi-Fi which is a specific programme for female entrepreneurs.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And given all of your experiences to date, a lot has been focused within the women empowerment space; what would you say are the biggest challenges that women still face today?</p>
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<p><b>The biggest challenge that women are facing is as I see it the respect or the lack of respect of basic human rights like the right..sexual and reproductive health and rights which are not respected and this means that women do not have the possibilities of being part of the economic contribution to their societies so I think the biggest challenge that women are facing is lack of respect of what I would call basic human rights and this is anchored in tradition, culture and this is why it's hard work to try to change this. In some countries, or in most countries female genital mutilation is prohibited; it's not legal to cut the girls but we still see many families due to tradition that they want to cut their girls and this is what I would call anchored in culture and tradition and this makes it very hard to change.</b></p>

DR. MALKA	It's interesting you mentioned human rights because South Africa has just celebrated its Human Rights Day on 21 <sup>st</sup> March and for me it's about remembering the elements that have gone before and how we can be progressive in terms of our development, how we can respect one another and also an opportunity where as you said, there are cultures, there are beliefs, but they may no longer be relevant in the present day and our life is about moving forwards for progress. So from a progression perspective, what areas do you think we need to build on the most to benefit women optimally in the future?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>As I...as Minister for Development Co-Operation I would say...I would get back to education; education is absolutely key, it makes a huge difference for a girl if she has the possibility to stay in school and to make sure that she's not getting pregnant and have to leave school unfinished, so I would say education and access to family planning is key as I see it. As well is also access to comprehensive sexuality education which is a huge challenge in many parts of Africa where...how should you avoid getting unwanted pregnant if you do not know how you get pregnant, to say it very clearly.</b>
DR. MALKA	Yes, that's a completely different challenge, we...and I think that that's part of the issue is that when you look at education from one lid lens there are some things which you automatically assume that people know and if they don't know it's actually not their fault for making the wrong choices, they're just completely unaware.
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>Exactly.</b>
DR. MALKA	Minister now turning to, I guess a slightly different slant and this is a question that I'd like to ask you because of your political background. I look at this as a bit of a polarisation with Africa and one is regarding female representation in parliament in third world countries, it's actually much lower in some first world countries. When I've looked at statistics from the Inter-parliamentary Union it shows that countries like the USA are ranked 100 <sup>th</sup> , United Kingdom 39 <sup>th</sup> , Germany 45 <sup>th</sup> , Denmark is 22 <sup>nd</sup> and African countries like Rwanda and South Africa hold 1 <sup>st</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> positions, Senegal is 9 <sup>th</sup> and Namibia is 11 <sup>th</sup> in the world and this data makes me question firstly how the low representation of women in first world countries as one aspect and also leads to a conclusion that perhaps the roots of female discrimination in society go beyond wealth or poverty; what's your opinion on this and do you think we will ever get to a point of 50/50 representation?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>I would never claim that we are ideal in my country but we still have efforts to do, we still have I mean also need to develop in many areas and..but what is so important for me is that there is no discrimination because of sex. What is important is that we have equal opportunities, equal possibilities and I believe that we have this in my country, there can be different reasons for us having just 22% of female members of parliament at the moment but it is not so that it could not have been different, if you understand what I am trying to say. In...to become a member of parliament in an African country is...can be a struggle because of your sex whereas in my country it's a struggle due to other reasons not because of your sex so it's the discrimination of sexes that is the matter for me and as I know it is difficult for women to be....it is more difficult for women to be elected to parliament in some African countries than it is for the men in the same countries. This is what I have learned discussing with many parts of different African countries, whereas in my country the possibilities are not related to your sex.</b>
DR. MALKA	So when we look at Denmark and also some of the other Nordic countries, they're very well known in terms of their lack of discrimination which is

	obviously in women's favour, that by having...ruling out discrimination it means that you are accessible to equal opportunities and possibilities. Minister we are running out of time and I'd like to ask you a couple of sort of personal questions; one that I ask all of my guests on this programme who have made tremendous achievements in their respective fields and that is about some of the factors that they consider have contributed to their success. So some people speak about the hard work that they've invested, other's talk about perseverance; in your opinion what have been some of the key drivers to your success?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>I would say...I would say strong support from my family has been absolutely key, I'm the mother of three daughters and they have supported me all the way through as well as my husband, even though I have been a lot away from home due to my work, but they have always supported me as well as my parents, they've supported me in this very fantastic journey and I feel very privileged that I've had the possibilities of doing all this. So I would say my family and then I would also mention a teacher in my primary school that the whole way through always said trust on you, trust on you, that I should be self-confident and that I should just go for it, so she gave me the strength to make sure that I would stand up, speak up and act. This is what she gave me from my primary school.</b>
DR. MALKA	It's wonderful to have such a strong influence in your formative years. Can you tell us about some of the pivotal moments in your life growing up; what influenced you?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>What influenced me? I will get back to my family, when I became mother of course this is always a very big moment in one's life so my family is really how can I say, my point of departure, my platform, my...it's where I get the energy, it's where I get the...how can I say...the silent moments to rethink and ja to also sometimes recover, yes.</b>
DR. MALKA	So they're the grounding base...
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>...yes...</b>
DR. MALKA	...that you always go back to and rejuvenate from. What would you say has been the best lesson that you've learnt?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>The best lessons that I've learnt is that you should always be true to yourself, follow what you think is the right way and you cannot always agree with everybody, you will get criticism but that is necessary to reach what you think is the right goals. So trust in or true towards your own ideas and ambitions.</b>
DR.MALKA	That reminds me of what you said earlier about "trust on you."
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>...ja...</b>
DR. MALKA	And lastly as we close out the conversation today, could you please share a few words of wisdom or inspiration which you'd like to share with young women listening to us today?
<b>MINISTER TØRNAES</b>	<b>I would like very much to use this opportunity to really as strong as I can express that I'm ready to fight for the millions of girls and women around the world who are not as privileged as I am and who do not have the same possibilities as I have and this I feel very unjust and therefore I'm ready to fight on their behalf and use the possibilities that I have as a politician to fight for them so that they hopefully one day is having the same rights and by this also the same possibilities as I'm privileged to have. So if I can just use this very great moment to express this and to make sure that really from the bottom of my heart I am ready to fight for the millions of women and girls around the world who is not as privileged as I am.</b>

DR. MALKA	Thank you Minister, that is so important, it is more than 50% of our global population that are looking to you to ensure that we manage to achieve equal rights and remember that women's rights are human rights. Thank you so much for joining us; it's been an absolute pleasure to have you on our show today.
MINISTER TØRNAES	<b>Thank you, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.</b>
	<b>PROGRAMME END</b>