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PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MAUD VUYELWA DLOMO – SOUTH AFRICA’S AMBASSADOR TO MADAGASCAR

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 today is South Africa's Ambassador to Madagascar; Maud Vuyelwa Dlomo. Welcome to the show!
DR. MALKA	Ambassador, you've served South Africa in international relations for several years; please can you tell us about some of the most significant achievements in your career.
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	Thank you. Firstly let me thank you for this opportunity. I've been lucky that I served in Head Office at the time when the International Relations Ministry and the Department was integrating after 1994, so we had to integrate diplomats from all different kinds of institutions which existed before, whether it was the national government, the home departments, you know, the Transkei's and the KwaZulu-Natal kind of...the one's we had and the liberation movements. So in.....we had to bring all these people who had been serving as diplomats in those different governments basically and my job then was to start training them. I knew for a democratic South Africa to say what are we saying to the world now that we are democratic; what is our foreign policy about, what are we about, what are the values, because they've changed, it was democratic, people based kind of democracy, justice, law, peace and stability but more importantly negotiations; to talk as people, as leaders of the country and resolve your problems through talking. So we had to do this programme and all ambassadors, diplomats going abroad must go through our training so that they are clear about that message we are sending outside to represent South Africa. The second one was we realised during this time that there are more older people who would be retiring; as we transform we need young people to come in into International Relations so we started a cadet programme; we targeted graduates from all universities and we brought them in and we developed them for a year, that's very exciting. Getting young people with a new energy, with a new vision about where things should go, with freshness about thinking and challenging and also embracing what we are doing; being those agents of change, for us to be part of that, especially when you meet that diplomat about four years later and they're like those diplomats which are respected in the world, that was exciting for me. Of course we started a programme for women in peace and security, not only in South Africa, but we also went to SADC, we went to the AU and we said we have to do this and for us in South Africa we're known as those people who have done something which has not been done anywhere in terms of dialogue, negotiating and coming up with a solution which we say is not perfect but it sort of worked for us, we are still working on it and there are many people and expert, women as well, who have been involved in mediation, in facilitating discussion whether it's at community level locally, at high level at home or abroad. So this programme about women in peace and security is about women being actively involved in

	<p>bringing up our peace, stability and security to only...not only to our country, but abroad, to be part of that UN system which also uses women. But also getting women involved in peace keeping, like in defence where they are defending countries which have just come out of war, but also we say, based on what the UN resolution also says, that women are the ones who suffer most when there's instability, when there is a conflict, so they must be involved because the agreements which are negotiated and agreed to are usually sustainable if women are involved because those people sitting around the table, if they are men, and they could be the same men who've been involved in conflict, they need to think about a different way of saying we are not going to ever fight again. We are not saying the problems will be done, the problems are always there in a system politically in every society but we must find a way of addressing them, women are very good at that, so we started that programme which is running now.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And what did you find was the difference by having women in a programme of peace and security as opposed to men, or just men?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>You know how excited....it's quite exciting because we had a programme for men women and we invited diplomats from all countries which have been involved in conflict, in Africa and elsewhere, but we said in our request diplomatically it will be great if you can also send women diplomats. So we had, in the first programme, we had women from Tanzania, Namibia, Chad, they are the ones who said in that programme, we want a women's only programme. We also want a once a year forum where all women meet and we want to be mentored by those who we know are already involved to tell us what's going on and how to do this as they have being doing it and even do it better. In South Africa then we came out with what we call.....International Annual Forum where while we invite women internationally but the emphasis is to say women in South Africa from all sectors come together and think and talk about how do we make sure there is peace, stability and security in our own country and how do we...once we achieve that, different levels, how do we then play our role globally, how do we influence the world so that it's also peaceful and stable because that's how the economy grows, that's how investors come to your country because you're stable and they're sure that there's not going to be a conflict tomorrow and they're going to lose money. That's how we get what we get from them whether they get our products to their own countries because they are stable, now they are concentrating on development and we have a role to play in that.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And it's interesting, looking at those different dynamics and qualities that women bring to the table on being able to have that diplomacy. Reflecting a little bit in terms of the role that you are doing now, you're currently the ambassador to Madagascar; can you tell us a bit about the challenges, the opportunities that your role brings?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>I think the first one is that as an ambassador sent by your own president to represent him and your country, you always have opportunities. You have opportunities in a sense that everybody respects that and everybody expects that you are going to help them to solve their problems to some extent. So I've had that opportunity and the honour which I'm still enjoying right now, so the main thing then has been how to engage society. You work with government at one level and the political parties politically and Madagascar is a country which has been engaged in conflict...recurring conflict since 1972 and it's all around elections, so they could be quiet now but if the elections are coming next month...the next elections are on 7th November. So we had to work hard to make sure that the political parties</p>

	<p>are preparing for that and to make sure that the cycle of conflict is broken and I must say that they've been very responsive, of course we are still...it's a fragile state, so we are still worried about whether the elections are going to work accordingly. There are those who come strongly from Madagascar itself to say no, no, let's just wait with the elections, let's first discuss, have a dialogue and come up with a political agreement which says what we want as a country; who are we and how are we going to resolve it, before the elections. But it is not as easy as that, particularly because in Madagascar they don't have a culture of dialogue the way we have, they don't sit down and discuss their issues so it's different, it's a different culture in that way but we are hoping...we've managed recently, around April/May, to break the silence of conflict. People were up in arms because they had...parliament has just come up with an electoral law which says some of the previous political leaders were going to be banned from participating in the elections. Of course they were saying it in relation to the principle and the resolution of the AU and UN that if you've been involved in conflict in removing others forcefully, then you are not going to be allowed. But the fact is when South Africa and SADC was involved with Madagascar, after the 2009 conflict, they made sure and they made sure that everybody signed an agreement which says those who have been involved in conflict, in forcefully coup d'état, removing others from office, which was in 2002 and 2009, are not allowed to participate. So they didn't participate in 2013, so the understanding politically is that they have served, now they know, in these ones everybody should be involved but government was feeling differently so the reaction from the society was like no, it's not going to happen, democratically all should participate. So that was a big issue and it was so big because they are used in solving these things in this way, they were ready to go and do a coup d'état and take out the president because he's the one who came up with the law. So we had to work very, very hard as South Africa is part of the international community and our president had to work quietly as a chairperson of SADC, sent envoys, get calls to all the political leaders, the former presidents. So we managed to get them but to sort of be committed in engaging in a different process. Of course the constitutional court was able to step in and say the president is going to stay in office all his term, but, government must dissolve and come up with a government of national unity, they call it a government of consensus. That flips things around; it broke the cycle of conflict at that point which always...that happens in that way to remove people from office.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Thanks for sharing some of the political aspects and conflict that your role entails and addresses. Some of the other aspects though I would say on being a female ambassador, particularly in Africa, is that sometimes it touches on sensitive points, be it culture, religion, tradition; in your experience do you think that women face different challenges to their male counterparts or are they judged differently?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>Of course. Of course. Of course. Firstly, in diplomacy, it's dominated by men, there are few women who are involved, but it's changing slowly and we are learning, as we celebrate Ma Sisulu for instance, we use that as a flag to say we are standing on the shoulders of those who went before us because that's how I'm here and it's not only about her of course, it's about all women, whether you're on the farm, in the community, at school, in church, everywhere, who've played a role to change our traditions and culture. Now, in every society and in Madagascar in particular, they've got very strong traditions, very strong cultures and they are not always supportive of women in that way. For instance, they've got a very</p>

	<p>interesting culture, two which I can think of, the first one is that even if you can be a minister, if you go to a particular meeting which is just them alone and you have a PA who is a male, he has to speak first before the minister. So I cannot get my head around that and it was the minister from Madagascar who told us this and said we are still trying to deal with this. In the family setup it's worse; it's men, they must do the talking, they must do whatever and the women have to prepare everything else to work the way it should be, so that's given and sometimes when you...if you become too strong for them you can see that they cannot deal with that because that's their reality so you also have to respect where women are in terms of their culture and traditions and what they're allowed to do. The second one was for me which was very, very interesting; I was coming out of the embassy, passing through the...our visa section and there was a man sitting there and I greeted him with a big smile and he just looked at me up and down and he became quiet, so I was with my driver, so I asked my driver; in your culture don't people greet if you don't know them? So it took him a very long time to explain because he was embarrassed, so he didn't know how to tell me this so I said no, no you must tell me, why was that man not greeting back when I was greeting him? He said no, firstly he didn't know that you're an ambassador so he expected a man; secondly in our culture, women are not supposed to greet men first, it's like you want them, you know, you are sort of drawing attention to yourself and men don't like that because then that means you are a loose woman to some extent, so perhaps he just looked at you up and down. I never laughed so much, I just laughed and laughed and I said okay, here I am as an ambassador coming out of my embassy and I see you coming as a client, I greet you with a smile like a South African friendly smile and you think I want you because you are a young man, I said this is something else. So those are some of the things we encounter.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Those are definitely challenges and as you say you've got your own set of cultures, your own set of beliefs and from a South African point of view, we are so hospitable, that it's the last thing you expect.</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>For me, I'm not going to change who we are and who I am, so I greet all of them with a smile and then...but I am very clear, this is about work, this is my duty, this is my job. There's nothing else. I'm greeting you because I'm being friendly because this is...it makes my work easier that way.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>But Ambassador having had that experience, what advice would you give women who are quite frankly torn between traditional and cultural expectations of them as women, as mothers, as wives and then their own personal needs in terms of being able to fulfil a career?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>I always say that use the opportunities, they're always there. That's why us as women who have reached the stage where we are should not impose on what other women should do but we can only encourage and advise and mentor where we are asked to. At home you work...you negotiate with your husband, your partner, about how things should work, even in South Africa we still have where in urban areas couples work perfectly, the man is the most sensitive and he does the chores and everything; once you go to rural areas it's different. You are going to be a Makoti and you are going to behave accordingly because in my culture that's what's expected. So the issue is not to judge women in that way but to say do what you can in the environment. I know even in South Africa there are women who will be in that situation in rural areas but at a certain time they will go to their husband and say hey, we have to get out of this, we have to get out, we have to go home, back home in Johannesburg or wherever you are in urban</p>

	<p>areas where I don't have to play this oppressive role the way I see it. So we take respect of our traditions, we respect our elders with all their ideas and attitudes and practices and the culture, but at the same time we have a responsibility to teach our children how to do this differently, how to change the way things are done, that's what we can hope for because I really believe we are in a better position than those two-three generations of women who were before us. So whatever they did, it opened a way for the next generation and that's how it goes and I tell young people all the time that you've got a role to play. Your challenges, your priorities will be different from mine, we are here to assist you but you have to think about yourself and also think about the future and the generation next to you. We have to slowly change things where we are in the best way we can.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And you've clearly demonstrated that culture is dynamic, that culture can change and also part of this is about educating the next generation and children and I would say not just equipping them on a social knowledge point of view but also in terms of book learning and book smart, to think for themselves and not accept their reality for what's being dictated to them.</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>Oh ja, oh ja, that's just so key. In an environment where you have the majority of people going one way and you think things should go the other way, you should be able to use that space to start creating change so that things go the other way. You shouldn't be afraid to stand up for what you think should change at that point, with all the respect, but as a woman you need lots of support to different people to be able to do that. I always say my grandmother was my role model; she was way ahead of her time. She used to say to me when I was growing up; education, education, education. She used to say to me you see, once you are educated, you could be involved in an accident and you won't have legs, you might even be blind - she didn't even know that we have all these rights now, we call rights with disabled people which is wonderful - and she said education will always be there, you'll be able to think, you'll be able to make a difference, you'll be able to say what you think should be said, you'll be respected for your thoughts – critical thoughts and engaging everybody else in changing the world. Now that's so important for women to do. So you've got the education but you also need the main tools around you. Associate with the right people; people you can learn from and people who can bring ideas to your head which you also need to sort of reflect on and see what works in your own condition and how you can work with this move...we are always in a movement of some sort. In Madagascar there's a group, a young group of women, they're running a project called which means Kelly Me – they say in terms of their natural hair; now in Madagascar it's a diverse society, Asian influence and African influence, so they say they're going to stand for their own identity and they've mobilised, they've got 10,000 followers on face book, they want to open their factory, I said to them they wanted to buy product from South Africa, I said Madagascar is rich in all kinds of resources you can think of, particularly in agriculture. You've got coconut oil out of all other products, go and take this and manufacture at home and start a factory and then I mobilised the women involved in business Madagascar, I mobilised other women who I know from elsewhere even outside of Madagascar and business people and I said you have to allow these kids to come and talk to you and tell you and assist them on how to open this business. Now in this project there are two issues; there's a political issue of identity; there's an issue of economic development and the role of women in contributing to the development of a very, very poor country. So you could see at different times that the women leaders who were involved in business and highly respected everywhere were</p>

	<p>uncomfortable with the identity part, the political part, they didn't want...they felt this discussion is going to divide us in Madagascar. I said well I understand fully, I think let's talk about the development and the role of women in developing Madagascar. So we agreed that the issue was going to be the role of women in development in business and how they can...they need support, information and mentorship. Of course when the women stood up and we had a big conferencein Ma Sisulu at a university because the university said the learners, the students have to learn from this, we want to be part of it and we must have this conference together. A young woman stood up and said it's about identity; identity as us as women, identity as us with Kelly Hair, we want to be involved and you are going to be involved, we want you to join us. So, you know, those are opportunities in what people do.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And when you're talking about that and gathering and congregating and as you said we're always in a movement; given the points and the sensitivities and I'm looking at this from a Madagascan perspective that you'd raised, that it almost makes more sense, you're not going to be able to change perspectives of men but if you are able to have these almost women only groups, that that's where they'd be able to build their confidence, that's where they're comfortable with each other, they're not in an environment which is negative but it allows them to prosper.</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>Definitely. I think we all have different backgrounds and where we come from and we grew up because they are always in a community, those women from when they are small, who stand up and say things have to change and then there are also those who are...they want to change and as they learn and grow, they participate in different ways but they will not stand up for political change. So in this instance I'm always sensitive that I don't tell them what to do, I don't preach on what has to be done, I just tell this story; the story of what happened when Ma Winnie Mandela, Ma Sisulu and all the other women stood up and said this should be equal, we are also involved and we need change. So I tell them the story and automatically women from different sectors within Madagascar stand up, even the universities, the professors stand up and say you know we want some things, we need a discussion where about abortion; women should have a right to abortion but we need to find a way and we need a woman champion. Of course I can't be the woman champion, I am not a Malagasy, but they have to find their own champion to do it. So you get different women prioritising different things about women and gender equality, which is important, so you allow them and when you talk to them and they are not comfortable, you don't talk about them, you talk about us; what we have done, what we do and then it's up to them what they do with it, ja.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>Now taking more of a personal perspective, one of the questions that I ask all my guests who've made significant contributions in their respective fields is about some of the factors that they consider have contributed to their success?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>The first one I think, as I said, my grandmother was wonderful in that way but also I grew up in South Africa during the apartheid period where most men were either in cities or in the mines from rural areas so you had women who were taking care of communities and their families. So I come from a family of strong women, so for me it has always been automatic that we've got a role to play, that's the first thing, but, education as I said, you need to learn and you never stop. You go to a conference, you hear people talking about different things which you think I'm not so sure what this is about; go an learn, first listen to what they're saying and then go and learn</p>

	<p>and learn and learn. So learning doesn't stop because unless we educate ourselves at different levels and we don't stop, men will always be ahead of us because they've got the time. We don't have the time because we have to deal with so many other things like your family and the kids and everybody else. The second one I always say, when you get to a working space, whether it's in an organisation or at work, be enthusiastic, be available to assist the bosses, what's happening at the workplace because you will be noticed in that way and people will support you. Come with what you have and say I'm available and I promise you in all my life and development I always thank and remember the people who've given me the opportunity to grow. There will always be one person, like here now, you are giving me this opportunity to share my experience in this way, you are part of those people who give you the opportunity to grow, to show what you have and they take you to the next level. As I am talking to you I am thinking mmm there are many other things I need to think about and do in the best way I can within the space that I have and the opportunity. So it's also allowing yourself...be enthusiastic and be available to assist and the other one is when you fail, we all have this, we are not confident enough at different times in different contexts, I still feel like that but don't allow that. When you fail, reflect on what is the lesson and how do you...focus, be focused about what your role is, what is the role that you want to play in your society, what do you want to do, what do you want to achieve. So when you fail on this one, sometimes I've had situations in my life where I will askto assist us to do something and they will say no, but when they are saying no they will tell you a long story about how it's going to fail. Then I'm thinking they give me energy once they do that, I become so angry, yes I've thought about this, I've consulted so many other people, so it's going to pass and now they're telling me that it's not going to fail, that's a challenge to me, it's going to succeed. So I go to other people and to other organisations whatever is there for you and just persist and persist and don't take failure as failure because it's never failure really. You might have failed right now because you wanted to do this, but there are many other ways to take, you might not follow that project right now, but you might do different things which are going to take you to exactly the same outcome at some point, when it's time. For me I have faith in the process, just trust the process, when it's time for things to happen they will happen but you have to work on it as well. The most important thing work with the people who support you, people who think like you, your friends if they think about you, your loved ones, your community, other women and everybody else. You know what I've found in Madagascar, young women and women and young people whether they're male or female, they're not afraid to come to you as an ambassador and say Ambassador let me introduce myself, how can you help me, how do I do this? I don't think we do that enough in South Africa. You need to go and ask for information and then they say these are high level people; go and see what can happen because then when a person says I'm looking for a job and this is what I do, I just appreciate the fact that they are reaching out, somebody has to help them in that way and if I can I do.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>You remind me of what you said earlier in the conversation about standing on the shoulders of our greats and unfortunately our greats are no longer here but if we've got the opportunity of our now and next to greats, we should be using them.</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>I agree fully. I think there are greats all around us all the time and it depends where you are, where you are working, there's a woman who's ahead of you who you admire for whatever reason and it could be that she</p>

	<p>has just lost weight and you are like mmm, how did you do this because I'm struggling. But everything else matters, use everybody who you see who's ahead of you, just admire and take everybody as a model...opportunity to learn that is and then ask the people to help you, those who can and then just go study people first and see whether they can, in some cases you will take a chance and then they will look at you up and down like whew and then they won't help you, but there will be those who will really help you. Look for information and that's my biggest thing about rural areas, they don't have access to information the way we do and because our data is so expensive they also...because the internet have opened up a whole new world to all of us but in rural areas it's different and if we can just get that right, we get that right in terms of making information accessible to rural areas to women, to young people. For instance in Madagascar, if you go, you have to come to Madagascar, women are involved in crafts, amazing, amazing, we call it craft, it's business. They've got bags which they use their own product which are sold internationally and some of the models you see them going there carrying those bags. They do all different things; poverty level is high, the economy is not functioning they way they are, it's not developed at all, but the work they do to manufacture what they have and then make it a business which goes outside, it's just amazing, it's just amazing and so you could be in a situation where there's not much in terms of development and there are not opportunities but there are actually opportunities for you to look at and develop and make a difference. So it's that also, appreciating what we have not always trying to get to a higher level of where other people are. It's about saying where I am, what can I use to develop myself, my family, my community and make a change and I've found, in Madagascar I've learnt a lot about that, just the role of women in just holding together the economy. Of course you can go to a higher level, there are a few who are just importers and they import these wonderful bags, the clothes and everything else, but there's...there are many opportunities in South Africa, I'm inspired, ja.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And finally Ambassador, as we close off the show today, could you please share a few words of inspiration or wisdom that you'd like to pass onto young ladies listening to us?</p>
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	<p>This is your time. This is a woman's time and the future looks bright, I mean we've been talking earlier about how women all over, in all sectors, whether they are in Hollywood, whether it's your neighbour, whether wherever they are, they've come out with such loud voices that men come out and support us and say actually these are our women, these are our children, these are you know, they embrace that. I was very, very inspired two days ago, yesterday, when the deputy minister of police came out, was talking about the Cheryl Zondi case and what I heard, he said I'm angry at how our women and young women and old women are treated. I am angry and I'm saying these are our children, these are our women and something has to happen differently, don't tell me that because you are a lawyer then this and this, we are talking about our women here so I like that and I think women have kind of support which we have not had in a long time. I also think we have got real challenges because now that we're getting stronger and we're getting united with the present challenges because they are different from our mother's challenge, the Ma Sisulu's and everyone, the question is how to deal with them and the women who stand up in different sectors to address these things, they help those who didn't have a voice, who have been afraid to come out and you don't have to come out the way the other one has come out. You have to work with your space, but we are</p>

	<p>here, let's talk, let's support you and say this is where I am, how do I deal with this. So I look at all different women as role models and what they are doing for us, but the future really looks bright, not just about women only, but about gender equality, that's so, so important but also keep your loved one closer. The other one I want to say is that when you are challenged, because you could be in an environment, doesn't matter how strong you are, you could be in an environment where really, really silly and cruel people come against you in different ways and these days you've got the social media, they will be saying all kind of things about you, bad things and you'll be surprised who will also join them, so it...the issue of that you are a woman, you've got other women might not matter, everybody comes against you at that point. Be strong. Don't show your enemies that you are down and out because it affects you; that's what they want, that's their problem, it's not yours. You are you, you are doing the best that you can where you are and continue. Much more importantly talk to your loved ones, your support, cry there and then tell them that this is difficult but when you go in that environment whether it's the workspace or wherever you are just hold your head high, don't read the social network stories, switch off the TV if you have to, if it goes against you, until you've found yourself because things always happen at a certain time and they will be resolved and I always like that saying that says "when the student is ready the teacher will come" so don't give up and don't allow bad people who are having their own problems because most of the time people who are mean to us it's because they're dealing with their own issues, they're insecure. Perhaps you got that job they believed they should have got it because they're better than you, whatever, whatever, just don't allow it, they don't have a right to impact on your life like that.</p>
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much for sharing; it's been an absolute pleasure having you on our show today.
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	Thank you so, so, so much, thank you for giving me the opportunity but also having this show, I think it's very, very important for women out there and I wish all of us good luck and I think we stand better when we are united; ja, when we appreciate each other as models of some sort because we are always models to each other in different ways, so thank you, thank you, thank you very much.
DR. MALKA	And Ambassador I would say that you are not just an ambassador for South Africa; you are most certainly an ambassador for Madagascar and an ambassador for our continent.
AMBASSADOR DLOMO	Very kind.
DR. MALKA	PROGRAMME END