

PROGRAM DATE: 2020-03-17

PROGRAM NAME: WOMANITY – WOMEN IN UNITY

GUEST NAME: MS JACQUELINE AMONGIN – MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT UGANDA AND MEMBER OF THE PAN AFRICAN COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

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 on the line today from the Pan African Parliament's Headquarters in Midrand, for the March 2020 sitting of the Permanent Committee is Ms Jacqueline Amongin, who is a member of the Pan African Parliament Committee on Agriculture and is a member of Parliament from Uganda for addressing Public Accounts. Welcome to the show!
MS AMONGIN	<b>Thank you Doctor and I am very available to interface.</b>
DR. MALKA	It's such a pleasure to host you on the programme and to hear some of the perspectives on women from Uganda. To begin with, can you please share with us some of the work you do and the responsibilities that come with holding your position as a member of parliament in Uganda?
MS AMONGIN	<b>Okay, thank you so much and thank you for hosting me on this talk show, I am very much honoured. You have just introduced my name, Jacqueline Amongin; I am a member of parliament in Uganda and I also represent Uganda in the continental parliament, the Pan African Parliament, and I think that's what I do on a daily basis. I joined parliament right away from the university and I have been a member of parliament since 2006 and my experience, I've basically been in parliament, I have served in the different committees including the Natural Resources Committee of Health, Committee of Public Accounts at the national level and also at the international level I have chaired the Committee of...I have formulated the Pan African Youth Caucus, which is a caucus which is now recognised as the Pan African Parliament now and I am now the...I have been chairing the Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Environment for the past four years, until I handed over last year and apparently I chaired the Pan African Parliament Alliance on Sustainable Development Goals; that's the Agenda 2030, which was agreed upon by our leaders or heads of states of the whole world, which defines our modus operandi of operation in our national governments. But that's not enough, I also mentor young girls through the foundation that I founded in Uganda, it's called Jacqueline Amongin Development Foundation and this foundation looks at skills and empowerment of girls to achieve their visions and their dreams. That's what I could say Doctor.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you for sharing some of the work that you are doing, so, looking towards the natural resources, the agriculture components as well as environment. We know that security and ownership of land are very important to social and economic sectors. In most countries, constitutionally, women have equal rights to men when it comes to land ownership, but given historical patterns and customary law, particularly in agriculture and rural settings where women work the land, the proportion of female land owners is considerably lower than men. Can you tell us what it's like from a Ugandan perspective?
MS AMONGIN	<b>Okay to begin with, it's very important to note that the Ugandan Constitution takes everyone as equal. Both men and women are</b>

	<p>constitutional and legally equal as per the Constitution of Uganda, but when it comes to land ownership and rights, I am actually just from a meeting where we have been talking about the Land Policy and women’s access to land and this question comes at a time...very timely. In the continent today and in Uganda I would say 7% of women own land despite the fact that the constitution stipulates the equalness of men to women, but because of the gender parities, the patriarchal dominancy and cultural beliefs, women are not fully engaged in ownership of land, although women contribute to the food basket of the nation and of the continent. So, when we look at the resolutions that were adopted by the heads of states it was agreed that 30% of land be accorded to women, but the modus operandi on how this land can be accorded to women in our different member states is still very wanting because we have different instruments in place at a member state level and those instruments do not openly advocate for women’s ownership of land and that’s one area that I am passionate about because we are talking about the Sustainable Development Goals of ending hunger, ending poverty by 2030 and we are looking at the majority of those who consistently utilise the land being women and yet they are not able to decide on what comes out of that land. It remains a big challenge for Africa, but there are some countries that have made some strides in terms of enabling land ownership for both men and women. But for the context of Uganda, we believe in our Uganda context it is believed that when a woman gets married she gets out of that family and therefore there is no way she can own land and when she gets married to another family it means that she is now a part of the other family and yet even in that family they cannot allow her to own the land, only that she can till the land. So that leaves women at crossroads because assuming in the case of a divorce, it becomes a challenge for a woman, because at home she has no land, where she is married she doesn’t have land, that’s why we are calling upon governments to domesticate what they agreed upon during the Summit of Heads of State, to allocate 30% land ownership at every member state level, to the vulnerable groups and in this case the women.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And you’ve spoken about policy, you’ve spoken about international agreements, but we come up time and time again with this issue of conflict between culture and you’ve explained that when a woman leaves her maiden family to then join her husband’s family, that she goes along without land ownership. Besides having policy, how can we start to create greater implementation of policy and putting it into practice so that a woman isn’t left destitute, if for instance, she is divorced?</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p>Yes, I want to believe that we have policies at a continental.....because the instruments that are endorsed by the Summit of Heads of States, remember these are representatives of fifty-four...fifty-five countries I will say, those endorsements should be domesticable and when they are not domesticable they remain just paperwork. So, I would expect that at a country level, there is need to form legislations that are very favourable for all in that country and including women and in this particular case you are right to say that we have policies in place, but how are they being implemented. As parliament, for me as a woman activist and as a gender activist in the parliament of Uganda and also at the continental level, I am very committed and I am always referring to the instruments that have been put in place by our leaders to ensure that women’s rights are honoured and all rights are honoured because I believe that there is nothing for women without the women and therefore this is not exclusive the rights to land and of course, the justification is there in our constitution, in Article 21 of the Constitution of Uganda, clearly stipulates that all people are equal before the law and therefore equality is in our law of the land and the constitution is our law of</p>

	<p>the land. So, I believe that the recommendations that were made at the heads, the adoption, the protocol at the Heads of State Summit, is in tandem with our national laws and therefore calling upon the governments to implement what was agreed upon. Of course we have challenges, some of the challenges include the cultural differences, others include religious differences, but that does not make us silent in terms of pushing for what is right for all and including women.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And with you using that word “being silent” it echoes in part, the African Union’s 20/20 theme of Silencing the Guns, creating a conducive environment for development.</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p>Yes.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>So reflecting, for a moment, on the current sittings at the Pan African Parliament, which have been running this past week; what would you say have been some of the key highlights for you, particularly with regard to women’s empowerment?</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p>The key highlights and I have been particularly following semantic areas of areas where I work on, although of course, I chair SDGs and SDGs is very cross-cutting upon all sectors, but I would say the highlights that we talked about throughout our session that we need to, when we get back to our parliaments, to ensure that they are brought to the attention of parliaments and also some of them included in our legislation. One of it is in regard to agriculture; our heads of states in Malabo, during the Malabo Declaration, agreed on a framework called the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programme whereby all Heads of States committed to allocating 10% to agriculture, but as of today, 2020, by 2017 only three countries had tried to reach that 10%, that includes Egypt, Morocco and Ethiopia, but by 2020, today, all of them have dropped. So that means no country has committed as per the declaration that they committed to. So that’s one of the highlights, as we silence the gun and creating a conducive atmosphere for development, I think that even if we silence the gun, if we are not looking at where our comparative advantage is as a continent, we will not be at the same pace with the rest of the continent in terms of achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and by allocating more resources to land, definitely you are addressing the concerns of the majority who till the land, I mean allocating to agriculture, you are addressing the majority’s interests and that includes also women. So, I think that is one of the highlights that we need to take seriously. The other thing that we need to look at is, we have just come from a meeting where we are talking about land rights and policies, and also land access and availability for the vulnerable. For us as parliamentarians we look at the available instruments in place and address the gaps, now in this particular case the available instrument is that there was already a declaration on having at least 30% land ownership by women in the member states and the frameworks were put in place on how member states can make sure that they achieve this. But to date a few countries have tried to implement and a few have...majority have not yet adhered to this. So as a representative of the people in the continent and also in my own country, I think this is one of the highlights that we need to really, as we celebrate the women’s day, in Uganda it is celebrated the 8<sup>th</sup>; I know South Africa celebrates on different days, but internationally, this is an area that we need to reckon on as a continent. And of course, when we are talking about silencing the guns, we still have conflict in the situation of conflicts in the continent, it’s not only...women also suffer most because sometimes when their husbands are taken off to the wars, to take up the guns, the women remain suffering with the children, with no food on the table, so if we created the conducive environment even peace will</p>

	<p>prevail. So, I have so many highlights, but one of the highlights I also want to make mention of is in regards to the changing climate; climate change has become a global issue and when you look at the available policies...the Acts of the national parliaments and national member states, you find that out of the fifty-five member states that we have in the continent, only two have climate change policies, that includes Uganda and Kenya. If we are to tap into resources and do global engagement and engage globally, we cannot fail to act locally so that we impact it globally. So that's one of the highlights and it's an imperative on the Agenda and that includes the what? The women. So, those are the highlights I could talk about as of now.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>And you are so right when you talk about climate change, that if we've only got two countries on the continent tackling what is a global issue, it's such a small dent in a massive context to try to resolve. Reflecting for a moment on women in leadership; women occupying positions in government and serving as heads of state is significant for a number of reasons, for example, from demonstrating the empowerment of women in governance, secondly women in these positions serve as role models for other women and young girls growing up to try to emulate them, thirdly having suitable gender representation is important in policy development as well as policy implementation, plus, given the fact that in most countries women form a slight majority of the population. As a woman in leadership, can you share your perspectives on this matter?</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p>Ya, I just believe that women will act as role models, especially those women occupying strategic positions, like in parliament, like in the executive, like in other different institutions, if only they serve the interests of those who put them there. Like I serve the interests of the people who put me in this portfolio, then I will be a role model to many, just like by coming to parliament I was also seeing other people as my role models. But then, my questions remain, we might have the numbers or we may have the less numbers, but how effective are those numbers? I will give an example of Uganda. Uganda is one of the country's that have tried to addressing an SDG talking about empowerment of women, in terms of representation right from the local level up to the parliament, we have women represented, almost 30% of our parliament is women. So the question should be; how effective are these women in pursuing women's issues, despite the generalities that occur in parliament and in so doing you find that you become a role model to many because they are seeing you as a champion. I speak as a champion because I know that there are many other young ladies out there who really see that I am working for their interests and in so doing I end up indirectly being their role models. So, I think that women holding strategic offices should act justfully so that they are able to inspire other young people to join some of these strategic positions.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>From what you are saying, and this is something that we see time and time again, people recognise you, people see you as a young woman and they see that you are being very capable in the political space, so that offers a form of inspiration to help introduce politics to younger women for them to know that this type of option and career is possible, that they can direct change in their country. What do you think, though, that we need to try to build more female leadership, not just necessarily in the political space, but perhaps in business and civic and academic sectors too?</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p>Well I cannot say that I can even tell someone that come to politics, go to business, go to this other sector, no, for me I believe that once you are providing the right service for the people, you will definitely get into any positions that you would to, whether political, whether the private sector or...it's all about service to the people. If you are not able to look at what service you can give to the people, then I know that you will not be able to</p>

	<p>lead, because for my instance, I was just addressing the gaps in my village where I grew up from, when I was a student at university I happened to be among the few women in that village who had ever reached up to university and I used to look at other girls having like seven children and they were very young, they were like nineteen, twenty-one; I said no, this is a gap, I need to address this gap and addressing this gap I don't need resources, I just need to go and talk to people so that they are able to understand the importance of educating both a girl and a boy child and to make them realise that all those children are very important. So, I started taking university students who were passing different disciplines; medicine, law, education, agriculture, to interface with our communities. It became one of the popular programmes and in so doing I ended up also being elected to parliament, you can just imagine, my interest was to change, I address inside the gaps within a small community but in the long-run I am able to occupy and today I speak as a member of parliament. So, my advice to the young people, that it's not just a matter of wanting positions, but you must be sure that you have the interest to address the gaps within the people that you want to lead, especially if it is in terms of business, look at the gaps that you want to address; if it is terms of politics, what are the gaps that you want to address. If you see that you are able to look for alternatives of addressing those gaps, then automatically positions just emerge, that's my perspective.</p>
DR. MALKA	<p>So, it's about identifying a gap, providing solutions to close that gap and that can happen as you rightly say, in absolutely every sector, whether it's politics, whether it's business or even the academic sector.</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p><b>Yes, because today people are looking for those who are able to give solutions to their challenges, where other people are looking at the problems, there must be those who are utilising those problems to be an opportunity for helping their people. So those are the leaders that we want and those are the women that we want.</b></p>
DR. MALKA	<p>A few moments ago you mentioned that Uganda's got approximately 30% female representation in parliament; when I took a recent look at the Inter-Parliamentary Union's statistics on female representation, it really stood out for me that five of our African countries are within the top twenty and often I find that people almost make an incorrect assumption that the state of gender equality regarding female representation in parliament in less development countries, is lower than first world countries, but, when you look at countries like the USA, they are in 82<sup>nd</sup> position, the UK; 39<sup>th</sup> position, Germany; 45<sup>th</sup> position and for me this data makes one question the low representation of women in let's say countries that are regarded as first-world entities and sometimes leads to the unfortunate conclusion that the roots of female discrimination in society go beyond wealth and poverty. What is your opinion of this, and do you think that 50/50% representation can ever be achieved?</p>
MS AMONGIN	<p><b>I believe in the positive world and that's where I live and I know that it's going to be achieved, we only need the right actors to keep drumming the momentum and all these processes can be revamped. We need champions at the different levels in the parliament and outside parliament, in the civil society, in the private sector, because if we have a space in parliament that as a lawyer, I know that it is parliament whereby everything is done, every decision is made in parliament. So, parliament is the only place whereby you can do anything, apart from turning a man into woman, or a woman into a man. Therefore, that should be the space whereby everyone should be struggling to be, because that's the hierarchy where all decisions are made, whether politically, socially and economically and they have impact on the general population. So to me, emphasising women's part, especially in politics and especially in parliament is very key. In Uganda we have</b></p>

	<p>affirmative action, we have females directly elected by young people and then every district of Uganda, we have 117 districts and every district must, out of the many other slots that are available, have one who must be a woman and I think that's a good starting point and that's an example to the rest of the countries. I was today morning talking to my friend from Liberia, I mean from Sierra Leone about their parliament and she's like they only have fifteen women... in the whole parliament; I mean, a parliament of 127 MP's having only 15 MP's who women, I said that's incredible. So, I think those are the areas, the gaps that we need to address in our continent so that at least there is a gender, but for me, I believe that a 50/50 representation by 2030, or even beyond, is possible if we get the right actors to dramatize, to influence policy makers and influence the heads of states so that this adaptable at the national member states.</p>
DR. MALKA	I can hear your gender activism coming through loud and clear.
MS AMONGIN	Yes.
DR. MALKA	Today we're talking to Jacqueline Amongin, who is a member of the Pan African Parliament, where she serves on the Committee on Agriculture and she is also a member of Parliament in Uganda.
DR. MALKA	Ms Amongin, turning for a moment towards a personal perspective; you mentioned earlier in the conversation that you have a development foundation called the Jacqueline Amongin Development Foundation, which focuses on the empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly women; can you please tell us more about that initiative on, you know, why you started it and how is it progressing?
MS AMONGIN	<p>Okay thank you so much Doctor for that question. Like I told you before, when I was a university student, I happened to come from a community whereby girls never attended university, not even secondary education. After you've reached sixteen or eighteen you are supposed to be married off for your brother to be at school and that, for me, I am honoured because I was able to sustain, to go up to university. So when I reached at university I was always inspired by my grandfather, now I can transform my own community to change their perspective towards girl child education. So I used to organise the university students who are passing different courses, especially girls who are passing medicine, education, you name it and we would go on the holidays to those villages in my district, to dramatize the importance of girl child education and I would see the appreciation that was coming from communities and in so doing, together as the students, we now formed the organisation called the JADF, Jacqueline Amongin Development Foundation, and our vision is transforming communities. Transforming communities in different ways, enabling them to ensure that girls have access to education, enrolment and retention at school and we also do continuous advocacy for girls who drop out of school and they are not allowed to go back because maybe they are pregnant, they got pregnant at school and in our school education system we are not allowed after you have conceived to go back to the same school. So those are the areas we engage in and we also engage in empowering those girls who drop out of school in skills development so that they are not just redundant housewives, but they are able to earn a living for themselves and for also their households and that is...we really focus on empowerment and transformation of a girl child. We do mentorship camps as well where we mentor young girls; we mentor them from the age of seven so that they are able to appreciate that when they are sustained.....it doesn't matter the community where they come from, they can be anything, because we believe that a tree cannot straighten up when it is old, it starts from when it is still what? It is still young. When a tree bends</p>

	<b>when it is still young, it cannot change when it has grown. So, we are focusing on mentoring the future leaders and future leaders does not mean necessarily only in politics, but future leaders in their communities, in their families, in the different atmospheres of life. That's what my foundation does.</b>
DR. MALKA	That's such a noble initiative where girls can be anything that they want to be, that you are giving them that opportunity to start shaping them, before it's too late, and also I think what's highly valuable is that for those women who have unfortunately fallen pregnant, that they've got a second chance in life.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Ya, they've got a second chance and what we always do, we get well-wishers, we always push for well-wishers and I want to call upon you, as you host me to be a well-wisher of the JADEF, the education foundation because in so doing we are able to raise resources to enable these girls to get back to school, for those who are willing to get back to school and those who are not able to continue with formal education, to go into skills education and they are able to sustain themselves.</b>
e	On that note, what is the website address for the foundation?
MS AMONGIN	<b>www.jadef.org.</b>
DR. MALKA	And JADF being J-A-D-E-F.
MS AMONGIN	<b>J-A-D-E-F.</b>
DR. MALKA	Perfect.
MS AMONGIN	<b>So, we work in areas of education, health and economic empowerment.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you for talking about your foundation.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Thank you so much.</b>
DR. MALKA	We've touched base on a little bit of your personal dynamics, but what I want to go into in a little bit more detail is about some of the factors that you consider have contributed to your success.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Okay, success I would say for politics I have already given you my background, that I was a student and I was doing service to the communities and I am always very positive about changing communities lives and in so doing people just told me, hey, you must go to the next elections, how about that. I was still a student at university and I'm like okay, why not, if people have said so I have no option, so I won, I became a member of parliament, just like that. But the intention was, I was already doing something to change the attitude of the people and my passion was on education, how can people change their minds so that they are positive towards girl child education as they are for the boy child, to avoid discrimination. That has always been my driving factor and I am making headway because I have achieved that at a bigger way. My success stories; I have been much mentored and mentored by different women I watched doing great work like the speaker of our parliament has been my great inspiration when I was in primary school, in primary two, I used to admire those women and I was like one time I need to be a member of parliament probably and walk just like they do, you know. So, that has led to my success, but success also, I have watching and looking at the simple space in understanding situations, but most importantly, reading on what is going on in the whole world, that gives you a right in terms of how you are legislating and how you are able to push for the right things in our day-to-day legislations. So, maybe that's what I could say.</b>
DR. MALKA	And when you were growing up, can you share with us a couple of key moments or important moments in your life that you feel have formed who you are today?
MS AMONGIN	<b>Ya, I think that I want to remember when I was a child...when I was a child and then I was three years old and then my dad passed on, but I wouldn't</b>

	remember my dad now of course and then my mum had to opt to remarry to another family and I remained with my grandfather, we remained, we were like three...four of us, me, my sister and my two brothers, but anyway, we are all doing well now. So my grandfather insisted that he must bring us up in the right way and I owe my success to my grandfather and my grand mom because they were very instrumental in our upbringing and they always put in us a spirit of working hard, of hard work, and they always insisted that despite other people saying girls should drop out of school and marry, for us at the age of sixteen actually our grandfather was even more passionate about our education and he kept insisting he will do anything to make sure that we complete education and I think that was a very good inspiration.
DR. MALKA	And that's quite rare if you think of his generation and their typical views of women at the time.
MS AMONGIN	Yes.
DR. MALKA	Now lastly, as we close out our conversation today, could you please share a few words of wisdom or inspiration that you'd like to pass on to women and young girls that are listening to us on the continent today?
MS AMONGIN	<b>I would say to the young girls out there who are listening to me right now, just know that success is right in front of you, from wherever you come from, it doesn't matter whether you are in a village setup, it doesn't matter whether you are an orphan, it doesn't matter you are whether are alone, success is just right where you are. The thing to do right now, what I would advise is try to do the right things and that success will eventually be seen in you and you will find yourself somewhere, just like I did. I come from a rural community, but success within my environment and there are those people who think that you can only be successful if you are from a well-off family, you are from an educated family, no, success starts with you and it starts in your heart. So, look at what is that thing that you are able to do at your tender age that can touch the hearts of others and in so doing those are the things that will propel you to greater heights.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you very much for that message of positivity of being able to drive change from within and being the change that you want to see.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Yes and Franz Fanon said "that every generation must out of relative obscurity, discover it's historical mission and either fulfil it or betray it." So it's in the hands of our young people to identify the gaps within us and it's up to us either betray what you have seen or fulfil it and it doesn't matter whether you are a woman, you can get there, it doesn't matter your gender, you can get there if you are determined to get there.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you so much for joining us today and for sharing your insights, your perspectives, both from a Pan African Parliamentarian perspective as well as a member of the Ugandan Parliament. It's been a pleasure having you on the show.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Thank you so much and I am honoured that you hosted me on this show.</b>
DR. MALKA	We look forward to watching your career go from strength to strength.
MS AMONGIN	<b>Yes, thank you so much and you've got to have a lovely day.</b>
DR. MALKA	Thank you.
	<b>PROGRAMME END</b>