

**MY SPEECH AT THE 7th AFRICA CONFERENCE ON HEALTH AND
SEXUAL RIGHTS, ACCRA, FEBRUARY 2016**

Excellences the First Ladies,

Dear OAFLA Members

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to be with you today in response to the invitation of our sister Nana Lordina DRAMANI MAHAMA, First Lady of the Republic of Ghana, Chairperson of OAFLA and Honorary President of the 7th Africa Conference on sexual health and rights, the event that brings us together today.

My dear sister, I would like first of all to extend my sincere congratulations on your election at the head of the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV / AIDS. You are currently the guarantor of the continuity of the efforts made by the OAFLA in the fight against HIV on the continent. I reiterate my support to you as well as all my encouragement in the discharging of your new duties.

I would also like to commend all my sisters First Ladies, OAFLA members, present at the ceremony. I would like to tell you that the determination with which you lead the fight to improve the lives of your fellow citizens, testifies the strength of your commitment. And I commend you for it.

Finally, I wish to thank the United Nations agencies, especially UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, and all OAFLA partners for the technical, material and financial support our countries receive. The synergy of your actions encourages the implementation of a global initiative for the elimination of the HIV epidemic on the African continent.

Excellences the First Ladies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all know, Africa today has more than 200 million young people aged 18 to 24, and they will be three times larger by 2050.

In Côte d'Ivoire, according to the Demographic and health survey of 2011-2012, the vulnerability of our girls is unfortunately increasing, with 8 girls for 1 boy contaminated.

And when we know that the number of new HIV infections is increasing among adolescents and young people, while it is declining in other age groups, we can do nothing else but get into action to stop the threat.

It is therefore essential to ensure better access of adolescents to information, education and sexual health services.

For this purpose, the Ivorian Government has very speedily undertaken to unite the efforts of national stakeholders and those of international partners to raise awareness and protect our youth.

On October 05, 2015, the Ministry for Youth, under my sponsorship and the technical support of the Ministry of Health, launched in Côte d'Ivoire, the initiative "All In" through an intensified campaign of HIV prevention and elimination among adolescents and young people aged 10 to 24 years.

The objectives of this initiative are intended among others to promote voluntary testing among young people and adolescents, for better care; and to increase awareness on sexually transmitted infections through innovative communication strategies for adolescents and young people.

That program, as it was launched, testifies a real government commitment to the fight against the spread of plague in Côte d'Ivoire. It stems from the joint action of several ministries involved, each according to their area of expertise, for best results.

My Dear Sisters,

Aware of this problem, the First Ladies of Africa that we are, will have to unite our efforts, with the support of national and international actors, to raise awareness and protect our youth.

It is therefore right that I welcome this initiative which will allow us to facilitate access to health services tailored to the needs of adolescents and to increase awareness about STIs, HIV and AIDS and reproductive health.

In this, the actions of the communities which are the community leaders, religious leaders; those of parents and adolescents themselves should central to our strategies.

Excellences the First Ladies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I strongly believe that by combining our efforts, we will succeed in making it happen, and help achieve the objectives of sustainable development. This objective inevitably requires the effective involvement of all of us in the fight for the elimination of the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Thank you