
UNSGSA QUEEN MÁXIMA DELIVERS KEYNOTE FOR G7 PARTNERSHIP EVENT ON WOMEN'S DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN AFRICA DURING COVID-19

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H.M. Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA), virtually provided keynote remarks for a G7 Partnership for Women's Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa event on 23 September 2020 during the 75th UN General Assembly (UNGA). The focus of the event was on catalyzing digital financial services for women across Africa by supporting recovery, resilience, and innovation during COVID-19.

The UNSGSA is one of the G7 Partnership's three co-champions, along with Mr. Bruno Le Maire, French Minister of the Economy and Finance, and Mrs. Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—both of whom provided keynote remarks at the event, as well, though Mr. Nicolas de Rivière, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, spoke on behalf of Mr. Le Maire.

Digital financial inclusion can help support marginalized groups, particularly women. Yet, 400 million people across Africa—60% of whom are women—remain underserved despite recent gains. The G7 Partnership launched in 2019 under French leadership to address this and help ensure a more inclusive Africa. It aims to support African governments, banks, and financial institutions to help underserved Africans gain access to financial services through digital channels. The UNSGSA previously met with Mr. Le Maire in December 2019 to discuss this initiative.

This event was held in coordination with leading African governments and select representatives from academia and the private sector, including:

Prof. Benno Ndulu, Co-Chair at Pathways for Prosperity and former Governor at Bank of Tanzania;

- Dr. Tavneet Suri, Professor of Applied Economics at MIT and Scientific Director for Africa, J-PAL;
- Ms. Cina Lawson, Minister of Posts, Digital Economy and Technical Innovation for Togo;
- Dr. Eyob Tekalign Tolina, State Minister of Ministry of Finance for Ethiopia;
- Ms. Patricia Obo-Nai, CEO at Vodafone Ghana.

Participants highlighted progress and challenges to achieve those objectives, share their experiences, and raise awareness around the opportunity for the international community to increase investments to accelerate collective impact. In her speech, the UNSGSA noted that digital payments are a critical lifeline to underserved women across Africa and vital to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

"Over 200 countries have expanded social protection measures, many using digital payments to provide transfers directly into bank accounts or mobile wallets," she said. "These programs provide an economic lifeline for very vulnerable people and are really the key entry point to the formal financial system."

Financial inclusion is particularly important for women's economic empowerment, the UNSGSA stated. It can bolster their resilience to illness, job loss, or a weak harvest. Queen Máxima also stressed the importance of key public goods, which include connectivity, cybersecurity, data privacy, digital ID and physical infrastructure, among others, to support digital financial services.

"Without these key prerequisites in place, countries could be left behind, relying on cash-based manual systems that are extremely costly and prone to leakages. These enablers will also provide an entrance for women's participation in the digital economy, including e-commerce platforms and tele-health services," said the

UNSGSA.

To read UNSGSA Queen Maxima's full speech, [please click here](#).