

SPEECH BY THE FIRST LADY DOMINIQUE OUATTARA,
PRESIDENT OF THE CHILDREN OF AFRICA FOUNDATION,
DURING THE NATIONAL COMMITMENT AGAINST GENDER-
BASED VIOLENCE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with profound emotion that I speak to you on this important day of our shared commitment to the fight against gender-based violence in our country.

First and foremost, I would like to convey the warm greetings of my dear husband, President Alassane Ouattara, the foremost champion of women's rights, who asked me to express his full support to you on this solemn occasion.

My greetings now go to my dear sister, Mrs. Maimouna Koné, wife of the Vice-President, whom I thank for being with us.

I would also like to extend my greetings to Mr. Robert Beugré Mambé, Prime Minister and Head of Government, and Mr. Patrick Achi, President of the National Assembly, as well as His Majesty Nana Désiré Amon Tanoé, President of the Chamber of Kings and Traditional Chiefs of Côte d'Ivoire. Thank you for supporting this national commitment for the well-being of our sisters.

My greetings also go to all the members of the government present here; particularly to my dear little sister, Ms. Nassénéba Touré, Minister of

Women, Family and Children and initiator of this day of national commitment, whom I congratulate on the remarkable work she has been doing to ensure that the rights of women and girls in our country are protected.

I extend my warmest greetings to our guests of honor, the Ministers of Gender from the Central African Republic, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, who have traveled to be with us this morning.

I would also like to greet my dear sisters, the wives of Presidents of Institutions and Ministers, who are with us for this important event. Thank you for your much-appreciated presence.

I also welcome the Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to Côte d'Ivoire, as well as their wives, led by Ms. Suhad Belliard, Ambassador of France. Thank you, dear sister, for being with us as always.

I also extend these greetings to all the members of my delegation who have come to support us.

My greetings now go to all the administrative and political authorities who have made the trip today, and particularly to Mr. Jean-Marc Yacé, Mayor of the Cocody district, whom I thank for his warm welcome.

I extend my special greetings to Sheikh Aïma Diakit , President of COSIM, and to Father Hughes Dimitri, Parish Priest of Saint John of Cocody, representing His Eminence Ignace Bessi Dogbo, Archbishop of Abidjan.

I also extend my greetings to the traditional and religious authorities who, as always, surround us with their prayers and blessings. Thank you for your presence.

I would also like to acknowledge the private sector, civil society, and the media, whose role in the national effort to combat gender-based violence is undeniable. Thank you for your implication and for the work you do.

Finally, my warmest greetings go to all our sisters present here, as well as to our highly mobilized youth. Thank you for being here in such great numbers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today to perform a solemn and historic act: to raise our voices, with one voice, to declare that violence against women and girls is no longer acceptable in our country.

Indeed, gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights, a direct obstacle to the empowerment of women, and a hindrance to the full development of our nation. Together we must act to eradicate this phenomenon from our society.

The figures presented to us by the Minister are certainly alarming, but they also reveal a changing mindset. The increase in reported cases is due to women who are brave enough to speak out more and due to efficiency in the reporting mechanisms. This newfound freedom of expression is, in itself, a significant step forward, allowing us to recognize the gravity of the situation and to collectively seek appropriate solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For over 28 years, I have made the protection of children and the well-being of women the core of my social and humanitarian work. Faced with the persistent reality of gender-based violence, I am deeply convinced that words are not enough and that commitment must translate into tangible and lasting actions.

While the ideal situation would be for gender-based violence not to exist in our society, the reality on the ground demands the immediate creation of centers to support women. It is to address this need that the Children of Africa Foundation inaugurated the "Safe Home" Women's Shelter in Adiaké on April 10, 2025.

This center, built by the Children of Africa Foundation, on two hectares of land bordering the lagoon, is a tangible, compassionate, and realistic response to the sufferings of our sisters. With its 100 beds to temporarily accommodate our sisters in distress, as well as spaces reserved for the children who accompany them; With its medical and legal services, its training center, and its spaces for rebuilding and learning, the Adiaké Women's Center is a springboard to a brighter future for all women in transition.

This center was made possible thanks to the generosity of our dedicated donors, who supported us at the 8th Children of Africa Foundation Gala Dinner. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

At this point in my remarks, I would like to warmly congratulate my younger sister, Ms. Nassénéba Touré, Minister for Women, Family, and Children, for her effective management of this center in collaboration with

the Children of Africa Foundation. Her daily commitment testifies to the strength of our collective action.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, you have all signed the National Declaration of Commitment against Gender-Based Violence, and I congratulate you! Thank you for this act of courage and responsibility.

I particularly commend the commitment of the Government and all the institutions of the Republic. By signing this document, you confirm the country's commitment to strictly enforce the laws against gender-based violence, to end impunity in all its forms, and to ensure the unconditional protection of every survivor.

I am fully aware that it is important to accomplish our goal together, and I would like to address each of the stakeholders involved:

To religious authorities: you are the guardians of our people's moral conscience. Your words resonate in hearts and homes. Thank you for supporting this collective effort to say loud and clear, in your places of worship and in your communities: no to gender-based violence.

To our Kings and traditional chiefs: you embody the customary authority that structures the lives of our communities. Your commitment sends a powerful message that the norms that have long justified domestic violence can and must be transformed. You are the main keepers of this transformation.

To the media and influencers: you have the power to shape minds. Inform, raise awareness, educate, but never trivialize. Every responsible report,

every piece of content that dismantles stereotypes, is a building block in the construction of a more fair society.

To religious authorities: you are the guardians of the moral conscience of our people. Your words resonate in hearts and homes. Thank you for supporting this collective effort to say loud and clear, in your places of worship and in your communities: no to gender-based violence.

To those in the private sector: gender-based violence also occurs in the workplace. Your commitments today must be reflected in your internal policies and your daily operations. Giving a woman an opportunity also means lifting her out of poverty and vulnerability.

To young people: you are the generation of change. Be men who respect women. Be women who refuse to remain silent. Be witnesses who take action. Your generation can force behaviors to be transformed and changes will take root.

Finally, to every citizen: if you witness violence, do not look away. Reporting is protecting. Complicit silence must end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now have a special thought for our sisters who had the courage to speak out today. These survivors broke the silence so that their stories could serve to protect others. My dear sisters, we have heard you, and you are no longer alone. Your courage is the moral foundation of our shared commitment.

To all the women who still suffer in silence, I want to tell you that you have the right and the opportunity to live free, to be loved, and respected. You deserve it!

The prosperous and developed country we want to build cannot be effectively and sustainably built without the full and complete contribution of women. That is why I urge each of the signatories of this declaration to honor the commitment made today with unwavering dedication and determination, until gender-based violence is definitively eradicated from our society.

It is on this note of hope that I officially launch the National Commitment against Gender-Based Violence in Côte d'Ivoire.

Thank you.