

**SPEECH BY THE FIRST LADY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE, MRS.  
DOMINIQUE OUATTARA**

**World Bank Project : A Girl Who Learns, A Woman Who  
Earns (FAFG)**

**Sofitel Abidjan Hôtel Ivoire, June 4, 2026**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to be with you today to officially launch this wonderful and ambitious World Bank campaign, "A Girl Who Learns, A Woman Who Earns," which is being launched today in Côte d'Ivoire.

First and foremost, I would like to welcome all the distinguished guests attending this important ceremony, particularly my dear sisters, Mrs. Maimouna Koné, wife of the Vice President, and Mrs. Kandia Kamara, President of the Senate ; as well as all the heads of institutions who have joined us this morning for the occasion.

I would also like to welcome the ministers here today, and specifically:

Ms. Anne Désirée Ouloto Lamizana, Minister of State and Minister of the Civil Service and Administrative Modernization, who is with us for this occasion ;

Ms. Nassénéba Touré, Minister of Family, Women, and Children, whose department is at the forefront of this major initiative in support of our girls and women in Côte d'Ivoire ;

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

I also welcome Ms. Hélène N'Garnim Ganga, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Organizations, as well as all the development partners committed to supporting this project. Thank you for being with us today to support gender equity.

I would now like to welcome Ms. Marie-Chantal Uwanyiligira, World Bank Country Director for Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Guinea, and Togo. Dear Marie-Chantal, I would like to thank you for this initiative, which reflects your determination to build a more fair and inclusive future for our daughters. It is both your efforts and your conviction that have brought us to this event. I congratulate you on your perseverance in bringing your vision of a more equitable society to fruition.

I would now like to extend my greetings to all the administrative and political authorities, particularly to Mr. Jean-Marc Yacé, Mayor of the municipality of Cocody, whom I thank for his warm welcome.

Finally, I salute all our sisters and daughters from various fields of activity, and particularly those who have shared their stories today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, education, health, and the well-being of our children are issues that are very close to my heart. That is why, when our sister Marie-

Chantal asked me to serve as honorary patron of the “A Girl Who Learns, A Woman Who Succeeds” campaign, I immediately said yes.

This national initiative aims to mobilize public institutions, the private sector, technical and financial partners, civil society, universities, the media, and citizens around a common goal: to make investment in girls and women as a key driver of social and economic transformation.

Before I continue, I would like to take a moment to congratulate the World Bank’s Director of Operations, as well as her teams, who are carrying out this project with conviction. This is a meaningful and compassionate initiative that places the education, empowerment, and protection of women and girls at the heart of our collective action. I fully endorse this vision, which prioritizes the well-being of women, for I have always believed that an educated young girl will later become a woman who actively contributes to her family, her community, and her country. I therefore encourage you to continue on this path and to mobilize all the necessary stakeholders and key players to ensure the successful implementation of this campaign.

**Dear partners,**

We have all heard the moving stories of women and girls who have overcome injustice, discouragement, and sometimes even violence to stand tall. They are living proof that our commitments are not in vain but they are bearing fruit. These young women remind us that we must continue to act together to have an even greater and more positive impact on our communities.

I am therefore happy to launch the “A Girl Who Learns, A Woman Who Wins” campaign, which calls on all of us to take collective responsibility in order to bring about lasting change for our young girls.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This campaign rests on three pillars that form a coherent and ambitious framework: education, financial inclusion, and the safety and protection of our girls. In learning about these pillars, I was reassured that the actions we have been undertaking with the Children of Africa Foundation for the past 28 years are perfectly aligned with the objectives of this initiative.

Regarding education, which is the foundation of this campaign, the challenge is to enroll girls in school and keep them there as long as possible. Each additional year of schooling increases girls’ chances for socio-economic growth and reduces her vulnerability.

This pillar resonates deeply with me, as it is precisely what motivated me, in 1998, to create Children of Africa, with the simple ambition that every child in my country, and especially every girl, should have access to quality education, regardless of her background. It was with this in mind that we inaugurated the Kong Girls' High School in 2000, which later became the Kong School of Excellence.

We also built the Children of Africa School of Excellence in Abobo in 2020 to give the most disadvantaged children the opportunity to receive an excellent education. These achievements are not simply infrastructure projects; they are the tangible expression of our conviction that school is the primary space for the empowerment of our girls. And I am proud to see that Miss Ajahi Djamila from the Abobo School of Excellence was

ranked 2nd nationally with an average of 167.66 out of 170. Please give her a big round of applause.

To further strengthen our children's education, we build and equip school canteens and distribute thousands of school kits each year to facilitate access to education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus offering them a better future.

Regarding entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, which are also essential pillars of our work, I remain convinced that a woman who has the means to create, invest, and build no longer needs to rely on handouts to meet her needs and survive. This is precisely the aim of the Women's Support Fund of Côte d'Ivoire (FAFCI), established in 2012, to provide women with access to low-interest microcredit.

Today, more than 430,000 women have been able to start their own businesses, regain their self-confidence, and become more independent since the fund's creation. The FAFCI is not just a simple safety net; it is a genuine economic and financial springboard available to our sisters. And the results we observe daily demonstrate that a woman supported in her economic project becomes an engine of development for her entire community.

Finally, there are important catalysts, such as the protection and safety of our girls, that must be considered to achieve our goals. No lasting empowerment is possible in fear or suffering. Ensuring the safety of women and girls, combating gender-based violence, early marriage, and female genital mutilation remains the foundation upon which everything else is built. This is why we have been working for several months to

protect and support our sisters who are victims of violence through the Safe Home Women's Center in Adiaké.

This center, built by the Children of Africa Foundation in 2024, was designed to listen, care for, and support our sisters to rebuild their lives and regain control. We cannot speak of empowerment without speaking of protection; they are two sides of the same coin.

**My dear daughters,**

**My dear sisters,**

You are at the heart of this campaign. I would like you to understand that your education is not a favor granted to you. It is a fundamental right that you must claim, and a strength that you must cultivate.

Never be afraid to dream big, to dare, to create, to lead. Dare to explore science. Dare to embrace technology. Dare to take on responsibilities. Dare to fail sometimes: the greatest successes bear the scars of their attempts. But never dare to give up. You are the future. And the future belongs to you.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before I conclude, allow me to reiterate my thanks to all the people and organizations who have contributed to the success of this campaign.

For my part, I am delighted to be able to lend my support to this wonderful initiative that promotes the education, health, and empowerment of girls and women in Côte d'Ivoire.

When a girl learns, a woman succeeds. When a woman succeeds, a family thrives. When a family thrives, the community grows stronger. And when the community grows stronger, the nation will prosper.

With these words, I officially declare the "A Girl Who Learns, A Woman Who Succeeds" campaign, initiated by the World Bank and its partners, launched in Côte d'Ivoire.

**Thank you.**