

MY ADDRESS AT THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP BY WOMEN SUMMIT 2026

"ACTING TOGETHER" – "GENEROSITY AND VISION FOR FUTURE
GENERATION"

TANGRAM, CMA CGM CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

MARSEILLE, FRANCE – MONDAY, JULY 6, 2026

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you this morning for the second edition of the Global Leadership by Women Summit.

First and foremost, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Ministers Sabrina Roubache—representing the President of the French Republic—and Elisabeth Moreno, whom I am very pleased to see again. Thank you for attending this session.

I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Tanya Saade, President of the CMA CGM Foundation, whose career and humanitarian commitment are truly remarkable.

I also extend my greetings and thanks to Ms. Chiara Corazza, Special Advisor to this summit, and to Mr. Jean-Christophe Tortora, Deputy CEO of CMA Media, whom I thank for his introductory remarks.

Finally, I welcome all the distinguished guests from around the world who are taking part in this important conference dedicated to women's leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When I was invited to share my experience on "generosity and vision for the benefit of future generations," I did not hesitate to come, because this subject has been at the heart of my concerns for several years.

Before my full dedication to this mission, I enjoyed a fulfilling career in the private sector. I began in real estate in the early 1980s by founding the AICI International Group; I served as its president as it gradually established itself as a benchmark in Cote d'Ivoire, across Africa, and in France.

Later, I acquired and expanded the Jacques Dessange Group in the United States, a company specializing in beauty products and services. I became CEO of French Beauty Services, which managed the brand's franchises,

hairdressing schools, and beauty salons in New York, Washington, and throughout the United States. These experiences were invaluable to me, instilling in me a sense of rigor, independence, and responsibility.

Above all, I was convinced that success is meaningful only when it is placed at the service of others.

It was against this backdrop that, during the 1990s, I began dedicating myself to social initiatives for vulnerable children in Africa and, gradually, for women in distress. In 1998, I established the Children of Africa Foundation—based in Washington—to structure and expand this commitment.

In 2011, following my husband President Alassane Ouattara's accession to the highest office in Côte d'Ivoire, I stepped away from all my professional activities to devote myself to the well-being of my country's vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I established the Children of Africa Foundation, I was firmly committed to helping young children who had been left to fend for themselves on the streets.

Even then, I was convinced that for our youth to thrive, all they needed was a suitable environment.

We have gradually created this environment, guided by a simple conviction: a child who is properly educated, cared for, and protected will grow into a fulfilled, accomplished young adult who contributes to their country. That is why, through the Children of Africa Foundation, we have made access to education, healthcare, and social well-being the core of our mission.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Foundation is active in the education sector, building and equipping primary and secondary schools to keep children in the classroom and ensure they receive a proper education and good learning conditions. In doing so, we aim to enable them to acquire a solid foundation of knowledge for the future.

As early as the 2000s, we built a girls' high school in Kong, in northern Côte d'Ivoire, to give them better chances of success. It subsequently became a co-educational school of excellence with over 2,000 students.

Since then, we have developed various other educational facilities across Cote d'Ivoire—including canteens and multimedia rooms—to help keep children in school. It was in this spirit that, in October 2020, we built the "Children of Africa" School Complex of Excellence, where the 700 students are fully supported by the Foundation.

This facility was built in Abobo, a working-class neighborhood of Abidjan, driven by the ambition to provide quality education to our children regardless of their social background. To our great pride, this school consistently achieves the best academic results in Cote d'Ivoire.

In addition, our ten bookmobiles travel across the country to bring reading within reach of those who are most isolated. These mobile libraries are also equipped with computers, films, and internet access, enabling children to browse the web, conduct research, and discover the world.

And because we firmly believe that a child who learns is better able to envision his future, we distribute thousands of school supply kits every year to underprivileged children across Côte d'Ivoire. This initiative helps support vulnerable families in ensuring their children's education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education, however essential, is not enough if a child lacks good physical health.

That is why we are also committed to the healthcare sector.

In 2018, we built and equipped the Bingerville Mother and Child Hospital, a state-of-the-art facility specializing in maternal and pediatric care. At this non-profit hospital, 25% of patients receive care free of charge. Furthermore, the hospital provides free treatment for 99% of the pediatric cancer cases it admits.

Together with our partners, we also address rarer conditions, such as caustic strictures and the implantation of cochlear devices for hearing-impaired children.

In 2024, to support the families of hospitalized children, we opened a "Maison de Vie" (Residence) in partnership with Morocco's Lalla Salma Foundation. Located next to the hospital, this facility provides free accommodation for families whose children are undergoing long-term treatment.

Additionally, a new pediatric cardiology wing is currently nearing completion and final outfitting at the Bingerville Mother-Child Hospital. This new unit will enable open-heart surgeries to be performed on sick children, helping to save more lives.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

A healthy and well-educated child must still be protected from anything that could compromise their physical and moral well-being.

It is to help protect our children that we are also actively engaged in the social protection sector.

In this capacity, I have chaired the National Committee to Combat Child Trafficking, Exploitation, and Child Labor since 2011, working in partnership with United Nations agencies and national NGOs dedicated to child protection.

This joint effort—closely monitored by the U.S. Department of Labor—enables us to rescue children from trafficking and exploitation, particularly on our plantations. It is worth noting that Côte d'Ivoire is the world's leading cocoa producer.

That is why it is up to us, collectively, to ensure that this cocoa is not produced at the expense of our children. Through these combined efforts, our country is firmly committed to a more responsible cocoa sector—one producing sustainable cocoa, free from child labor, that consumers, manufacturers, and retailers worldwide can purchase with a clear conscience.

In this context, we have established several care centers in Abidjan and across the country to assist children in need, take them in, and provide the living environment they require to thrive.

The Children's House is the first orphanage we established, back in 1998; it was renovated last year to accommodate more children in a friendlier, more pleasant environment.

Today, the Foundation is preparing to build a Youth Center to welcome our young people and provide them with a setting for socio-cultural development that aligns with their interests.

As you are likely aware, the United Nations projects that by 2050, four out of every ten young people worldwide will be African. Furthermore, according to African Union projections, people under the age of thirty-five will make up as much as 75% of Africa's population by 2030. These figures have reinforced our thinking, as this youth population represents a vital force that requires our utmost attention and support. We must actively address the concerns of the new generations in order to offer them better prospects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

No child can truly thrive if their mother remains vulnerable. That is why we sought to take parallel action to support mothers, thereby helping to maintain family stability for the children.

Thus, in 2012, with the assistance of the President of the Republic, we established a microcredit fund known as the *Fonds d'Appui aux Femmes de Côte d'Ivoire* (Fund for Supporting Women in Côte d'Ivoire) to facilitate financial inclusion for women in the country.

Since its inception, this fund has enabled more than two million people across the country to lift themselves out of poverty.

In the same spirit, and to ensure better protection for women and children who are victims of violence, we inaugurated the "Safe Home" for women in Adiaké in 2025. The aim of this facility is to provide shelter and care, and to help women and girls who have suffered violence rebuild their lives.

None of these initiatives would have been possible without the significant contribution of our donors, whom I wish to thank warmly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like to thank the organizers of this wonderful event for inviting me to share my experience from this podium.

I sincerely hope you are convinced that generosity, when driven by a strong vision, can transform lives and have a lasting impact on communities across the globe.

To the decision-makers present here today, I encourage you to dedicate a portion of your success—however much you can—to the well-being of those who do not yet have the means to build their own futures. For there are no small gestures when it comes to the future; there are only great human actions to be undertaken.

Thank you.