

Address by H.E. Cristina Duarte to the Media Announcing Her Candidacy for the Presidency of the African Development Bank

6 October 2014

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for honoring the invitation to be here with us today.

We called for this meeting today to make an announcement.

After a long process of deliberation, Cabo Verde will be presenting a candidate for the next election of the presidency of the African Development Bank to take place in Abidjan next May. It is an honor for me to announce that I am that candidate.

Over the last 9 years, I have served as the Minister of Finance and Planning under the Government of H.E. Jose Maria Neves. Prior to assuming this post, I worked in the civil service in Cabo Verde, as a banker with the prestigious Citibank in places such as Kenya and Angola, and also as an international consultant to various international institutions.

Today, I am making myself available for the service of my continent, Africa. What is clear is that my candidacy is unique and, if elected, I will be the first woman and first Lusophone to lead the African Development Bank. This will be historic moment. It is time that we make history together.

The next president of the African Development Bank will have a tough act to follow. In fact, I have utmost admiration for those that have led this important institution. Each one made key contributions, laid the foundation and built an institution that today is well known, respected and credible. More importantly, it is an institution that is making progress in Africa possible, whether in helping to avert severe impacts of the global financial crisis or lately working with others to provide funding to support countries facing the Ebola crisis.

The result is a Bank that today is trying to live up to its promise as the 'Africa's premier development finance institution'. A key goal now must be to consolidate the gains accomplished so far.

However, I also know that we must do more than consolidate the gains. We must build on the gains to ensure that the bank is on a solid footing to face the challenges of the future. We must ensure that we take the Bank to the next level in order to satisfy the aspirations of its stakeholders and most importantly to help Africa realize its most elusive goal of structural transformation.

The Bank, in my view, can be the premier instrument of Africa's transformation. It must be and it will be if I am given the opportunity to lead our bank, the African Development Bank.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am running for the presidency of the African Development Bank because of my deep belief that Africa can do much better. We must. The future generations demand this of us.

First, we have to expand our vision beyond simply alleviating poverty. We Africans must aim to structurally transform our economies and societies and become globally competitive in order to create wealth, end poverty, as we know it today, and provide each African the opportunity for self-actualization.

The challenge before us is huge. However, we also have the opportunities that those before us never had nor could have dreamt off. The task before us now is to re-organize and refocus on the core issues for the continent.

I believe that the African Development Bank is a natural leader and it must be the partner of choice for African countries and governments in addressing the myriad challenges that persist on the continent and that hinder our socioeconomic transformation. The Bank must live up to its vision as the partner of choice for African countries.

Secondly, I am running because I believe we can make this happen with the support of the stakeholders of the Bank. If elected, my agenda will be driven by the need to ensure structural transformation in Africa so that the current Africa rising scenario does not end up a nightmare.

As candidate, I have begun to consult with stakeholders and experts. We are engaged in conversations and listening to both civil society and African business community. This is fundamental in order to build a robust agenda for our Bank. In this still early stage, I believe that my agenda for the African Development Bank will have two critical elements: the first is to consolidate the gains and the second is to build a new transformative program.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Bank has made significant gains under President Donald Kaberuka, which we must consolidate and build upon. In fact, the progress of the last decade and the challenges of the rapid growth cannot be neglected. In the issue of consolidating gains, let me identify four critical areas:

1. Becoming a true development partner: Africa's structural transformation can only be guaranteed if we are able to build the right governance and business environment in Africa. The Bank must continue to support African countries to undertake deep and extensive business and governance reforms to facilitate infrastructure development, private sector growth, and create a business environment that is conducive for investment and economic activities. Here we will have to build on the closer proximity to the Bank's clients, which has been achieved through decentralization, increase dialogue with member countries, and find ways to support and serve as a catalyst for fundamental reforms in Africa.

2. Supporting the private sector. We will have to build on the private sector programs by seeking new ideas and new ways to ensure that the Bank is more responsive to the unique challenges facing African countries. Crucially, we will listen more. We will build a platform for ongoing dialogue with Africa's private sector and from this develop targeted programs and products that can better respond to the needs.

3. Developing Infrastructure, both physical and institutional. The Bank has made significant progress in investing in infrastructure. We can improve on this by building a larger coalition and extending key programs such as the Africa50 project by bringing new partners and new sources of funding to build the physical infrastructure in Africa. It is also clear that no amount of physical infrastructure without the needed institutional infrastructure will lead to transformation. As such, we must seek to develop, with partners, robust funding programs to finance institutional reforms and capacity building in Africa.

4. Building a green economy, as an economic and environmental imperative. We have to go green. Africa has the opportunity as a late starter to leapfrog the world and show the way. We have two reasons: the economics is good and we must protect the environment to ensure a livable world for future generations. The Bank has begun work in this area but it must be taken to the next level.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This leads me to the second element of my agenda that will focus on transformation. Africa's socioeconomic transformation was the vision of our post-independent leaders; it was the vision behind the Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 with the call for industrialization. Structural transformation has been elusive for the continent and I believe this should be the rallying cry for this generation and the next. African Development Bank must become Africa's partner and it has a critical role to play in ensuring Africa's structural transformation. As such, my agenda if elected will include:

Serving as a catalyst for innovation and creativity. The fact is that the African continent is full of creativity and innovation, especially among its youth. We must awaken the latent creative and innovative capacity of our peoples. It is the only way to achieve structural transformation. We have no choice but to raise our creative and innovative energies, and build the ecosystems and the institutional environment that is conducive to innovation. Africa does not have to follow the same trajectory as others; we can and must leapfrog through innovation. Here ICTs will be critical. However, innovation is not limited to the hard technologies; it is also social and it is cultural. Innovation and creativity is an agenda that must permeate all aspects of the development process. I do promise, if elected, to place emphasis on making the bank a catalyst for innovation on the continent.

Engendering Development. I also believe that Gender must move from slogan or cross cutting issue to become an integral part of the development agenda. This is an issue that I am particularly sensitive to, as an African woman. It is close to my heart and I deeply believe that unless we address the gender disparity in Africa we will have difficulty in transforming our economies and societies. For me, it is both a human issue and also one of economics.. Africa, as a continent, is a competition and we cannot afford to enter a competition with half of our team unprepared and with their hands tied behind their backs. We don't allow that in any competitive sport why then do we continue to allow this in the critical aspects of our lives and society in Africa?

Financing Development. The need for financing throughout the continent is huge and it is expected to continue to grow, both for investments and for infrastructure. To meet this need, we continue to seek aid, development assistance and foreign direct investments. We will need to continue to rely on external sources. However, we can do more internally to raise additional resources specifically on the continent. We do need to own up to the fact that we have resources and must spend as much time if not more to mobilize funds from within the continent. How can we continue to ask others to invest in our continent and in our development if we are not doing the same to the full extent of our ability? This is an area that the African Development Bank can also play the role of a catalyst. The Bank must place renewed emphasis on creating new products and financing mechanisms for development. There are many options, from building upon the Bank's issue of bonds in local currencies, working with central banks and pension funds to finding secure ways to invest on the continent. Other options are assisting countries to put in place institutional and policy environment that promotes and support national investments and helping to facilitate new technologies to reach out to the bottom billion. This is an area that the Bank must take the lead.

Lastly, we cannot achieve any agenda or the one I am proposing if we do not improve the internal workings of our Bank. We must ensure that our Bank does not become an international bureaucracy. A key focus therefore must be on ensuring that the Bank becomes an effective and efficient institution while reducing bureaucracy and costs. The recent programs of decentralization have allowed the Bank to better engage and be closer to its clients. But it is also clear that decentralization has its own

challenges. We must reevaluate and consolidate in a way that we do not jeopardize the recent gains of decentralization. We must also push for a culture of efficiency within the Bank and ensure that we right-size the Bank while having the right people in the right positions. Importantly, we must reimagine the role of the Bank in Africa and ensure that we build an institution that is able to partner with African countries to achieve the vision of structural transformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me conclude by thanking the current and former Presidents as well as the staffs of the African Development Bank for turning the idea of fifty years ago into what is today the African Bank. It is an honor for me to be running to lead our Bank.

This is a candidacy of Cabo Verde. I am grateful for the confidence that the nation has placed in me and would like to thank all Cabo Verdeans, including civil society, the political and business class and the media.

Thank you all and I continue to count on your support.