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POST PRESS RELEASE

GRACA MACHEL ENCOURAGES AFRICAN WOMEN TO LEAD BUSINESSES AND TO CONTROL WEALTH

She hosted today an Investment Panel where 10 African women presented today their business plans of expansion to a group of investment experts in Pretoria, South Africa

10 African women entrepreneurs from post-conflict countries presented today, 9 February 2011, their business plans of expansion to a group of investment experts in Pretoria, South Africa, during a meeting organized by Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS), its PanAfrican Centre for Gender, Peace and Development (PAC) and the IE Business School of Madrid, with the support of the Spanish Government.

"We envisage and we encourage women that in the next 10 to 15 years if there is one fundamental social change which has to take place in our continent it is precisely women controlling wealth, leading business and having their voice and aspirations heard at the table of the big discussions of the big business," said Hon. Dr. Graça Machel, President of the Foundation for Community Development (FCD), who hosted the event. According to her, *"African business women need to get access to assets, to lead their own business and to reap the results of those businesses"*.

Moreover, she added that FAS has been supporting these women not only to overcome the complexities of the situation of conflict but to change the attitude of women as agents of peace. On the other side, Mrs. Bineta Diop, Founder and Executive Director of FAS, remarked that *"without these African women, we would not get where we are right now. These business women will contribute in a meaningful way in the development of the continent"*.

During the event the 10 women introduced their business plans to a panel of investment experts who said that they would like to find a way of partnering with these women in some aspects of their business and they were impressed by what they heard.

The program Women Led Business started with 24 participants coming from post-conflict countries such as Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Rwanda, as well as South Africa and Senegal.

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