It is with great joy and honour that I address you on the occasion of this meeting of the The Network of Elected Local Women of Africa (REFELA).

Allow me first of all to thank the people and authorities of Egypt for the quality of the welcome we have received since our arrival in Cairo. I
would particularly like to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Egypt and convey to him the sincere congratulations of the Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa for his brilliant election as President of the African Union. I would also like to thank the Egyptian government for encouraging and supporting the establishment of a national chapter of REFELA in Egypt. With REFELA Egypt, our network now has 24 national chapters, and we plan to set up by the end of 2020, 12 additional national chapters of REFELA in other African countries, which will bring the number of national chapters of REFELA to 36 by this time.

I would like to remind you that REFELA's leitmotif is to promote greater participation of women in the governance of local authorities, and better consideration of women's concerns in the policies pursued in our cities and territories.

The statutes of UCLG Africa stipulate that wherever a national association of local authorities exists, the national chapter of REFELA must be considered as the permanent "Gender Equality" commission of the said national association. The fact that Egypt has accepted the establishment of a national chapter of REFELA reassures us of Egypt's desire to take better account of the place and concerns of women in the governance of Egypt's cities and territories. We congratulate the women leaders and members of the territorial assemblies of Egypt for this noble initiative and assure them of the constant support of the REFELA Executive Board.

We also welcome the fact that our world organisation has instituted that only lists of candidates from different regional sections with at least 30 per cent women will be eligible for UCLG bodies at its next World Congress from 11 to 15 November 2019 in Durban, South Africa. We hope that the UCLG Africa Executive Committee will take the necessary steps to present lists of candidates that meet this requirement at the next UCLG Congress in Durban.
At this point, I would like you to join me in paying tribute to the first locally elected women mayors of Africa, who have chaired our network since its creation in 2011 in Tangier, Morocco, and who are:

- *Ms. Milouda Hazib, from Morocco*
- *Ms. Maria Elena Langa, from Mozambique*
- *Ms. Fatimetou Abdel Malick, from Mauritania*
- *Ms. Célestine Ketcha Courtès, Cameroon*

We can never pay enough tribute to their dedication to the cause of REFELA and their contribution to the Network's influence. And I am committed to protecting and promoting this precious heritage with the collaboration of the members of the Bureau, the leaders of the national chapters, and all the members of REFELA.

To be worthy of this legacy, we must successfully implement the three campaigns included in REFELA's 2019-2021 three-year plan, namely:

- **The campaign of African cities without children in the streets**, launched on 24 November 2018 in Marrakech by Her Godmother, Her Royal Highness Lalla Meryem of Morocco, a campaign to which nearly 70 African cities have already joined;
- **The African Cities Zero Tolerance Campaign on Violence against Women and Girls**, whose call for expressions of interest is launched among African cities;
- **The African Cities for Women's Empowerment and Economic Leadership Campaign**, which emphasizes, inter alia, the adoption by African communities of gender-responsive budgeting, and the preference given to women-led enterprises in community tenders of equal quality and price compared to those submitted by men-led enterprises. This campaign will be launched shortly.

Each national chapter of REFELA is called upon to promote and implement these campaigns with the support of the Vice Presidents of the different regions, the members of the Bureau and the REFELA secretariat, under the expert guidance of Mrs Malika Ghefrane in Rabat, whom I congratulate and whose competence I salute. I do not forget to
associate the Secretary General of UCLG Africa with these congratulations for his constant support and wise advice.

REFELA is the voice of women elected locally in every country in Africa, in every region of the continent and in the world. In this respect, REFELA is working on the definition of a Charter of African local and regional authorities for gender equality, in collaboration with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments, UCLG. The objective is to have this charter adopted by the next Africites Summit in November 2021 at the latest.

REFELA must maintain close collaboration with the African Union, in particular the department of the African Union Commission in charge of women's issues. REFELA must also develop cooperative relations with United Nations organizations that are active in its fields of action, in particular UN Women and UNICEF. The various national chapters of REFELA must urgently contact the African Union, UN Women and UNICEF representations in their respective countries to engage in dialogue with them with a view to establishing mutually beneficial partnerships. In addition, REFELA must be more active within UCLG's Standing Committee on Gender Equality at the global level and collaborate with it to strengthen the voice of women in our global organisation. One of the objectives of this collaboration must be to bring an international dimension to the three campaigns initiated by REFELA.

But above all, REFELA is counting fervently on the political support of our Heads of State for its cause and their support for its initiatives. This is an opportunity for me to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr Alexandre Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, who has just submitted the law on the representativeness of Ivorian women in elected assemblies to the vote in parliament. We sincerely hope that this example and many others like it will be multiplied in all African countries so that women can finally regain the place and role they deserve in our societies.
We, the women members of the African Network of Locally Elected Women, are determined to contribute to the achievement of the African Union of Africa's Agenda 2063 that We Want, and to the implementation of the United Nations agendas, particularly those related to the Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change.

As President of REFELA, I would like to confirm my full and firm commitment to faithfully serve the ideals and objectives of the Network and our parent company, UCLG Africa, so that Africa's development, integration and unity may flourish.

I thank you for your trust and I ask the Almighty to give me the wisdom, strength and means to deserve it.

Mrs. COULIBALY DAO MACOURA,
MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF FOUMBOLO-COTE D'IVOIRE
PRESIDENT OF THE NETWORK OF ELECTED LOCAL WOMEN OF AFRICA (REFELA)