**Speech on occasion of International Women’s Day, 7 March 2017**

**By H.E. Jo Lomas, British High Commissioner to Namibia**

**Check Upon Delivery!**

First Lady Madam Monica Geingos, Honoured guests

How wonderful to be hosting an event which is full of such bright, intelligent enthusiastic women (not to exclude our male guests of course!).

This year we wanted to celebrate International Women’s Day but with a purpose. We looked at the great work around the world to encourage young women to be the best they can. And that included the work of the First Lady’s One Economy foundation. This mentoring/networking event builds on that work. The idea behind today is that all our wonderful contacts bring along a young woman with a bright future in Namibia who would benefit from this occasion. That might just be by networking today, talking to one of our contacts or by putting their names forward for a more regular mentoring relationship. The First Lady’s office went even further by putting out a call for and then sifting 300 bids!!!

I am a big supporter of mentoring and have found it useful at different stages in my life. Certainly my best experience was when I moved from a job managing a team of 5 to a job running our FCO global out of hours centre and a team of 30. I really benefited from having a mentor (who happened to be a woman) to test ideas and above all to boost my confidence. Being able to do that job well, helped me move up in my career and I hope some of you here will find similar benefits.

Madam First Lady we are honoured to have you here today. We acknowledge all the great work you and your team have done in this area to support young women and the efforts you took to bring so many amazing ladies here today. I had a moment of panic when I saw your tweet go out last week seeking volunteer mentees for this event. But your team have done a wonderful job bringing together some women who might not otherwise have been on the radar. So thank you so much to you and your team. And now I would like to hand over to our honoured guest to say a few words.

FIRST LADY TO SPEAK

Thank you so much for those inspiring words. Now I am going to ask two ladies who have been very successful in their chosen fields to give us a few top tips on what has worked for them. They are Leonie Dunn, Head of the Financial Intelligence Centre and Ally Angula the successful businesswoman behind the proudly Namibian Brand – My Republik

LEONIE Dunn AND ALLY Angula TO SPEAK

Thank you so much to Leonie and Ally. I also wanted to welcome Michael Chikwililwa of Windhoek Toast Masters. Michael is a great person to talk to for tips on public speaking and personal impact. We‘re very grateful he has made himself available to be here today.

Now before I wrap up I just wanted to tell you about our next steps. We hope that many of you will make good contacts here today and I hope everybody will feel free to approach any of our guests who represent public sector, business, media, diplomacy and many more sectors. But we are also happy to pair people into mentoring relationships. Please, if you are willing to be a mentor or a mentee, sign your details on the book at the entrance before you go. Tell us a little bit about yourself and we will try to perform a matchmaking service. And if we run out of mentors don’t worry we will have plenty of other colleagues who could not make it here today who we will approach.

Also feel free to tweet about this event. We are using #IWD2017 and #beboldforchange. My handle is JoLomasFCO and the first Lady (or FLON) hashtag needs no introduction! All details and wifi code are available on the front desk.

Finally, thank you to my wonderful team for helping organise this event especially Stacy Pinto my Economic diplomacy officer. Thank you once again Madam First Lady and distinguished guests for coming. Please enjoy the rest of the event.