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### **Graça Machel Trust Launches Women Advancing Africa**

#### **A Movement to Elevate Women's Leadership in African Development**

*Women Advancing Africa Forum to convene pre-eminent women in business, government, the private sector, philanthropists, academia, civil society, thought leaders and influencers from the continent, as well as global shapers and leaders  
August 10-12 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania*

**Dar Es Salaam, March 17, 2017** – The Graça Machel Trust (GMT) announced today the launch of a Pan-African Forum, Women Advancing Africa (WAA) to acknowledge and highlight the critical role women have been playing in shaping Africa's development agenda and driving social and economic transformation.

The Women Advancing Africa (WAA) initiative seeks to 'Multiply the Faces and Amplify the Voices' of African women to drive inclusive and sustainable growth across the continent. It will celebrate Africa's diversity by bringing together women from varying backgrounds, regions and ages, to participate and share ways in which to unlock Africa's economic potential.

On what makes the WAA Forum different, Mrs. Graça Machel says, "To our knowledge there are not many places or platforms where extraordinary examples of successes by African women are showcased. Through this Forum, we want women to come together to celebrate and learn from one another, identify priorities and develop a common agenda to achieve social and economic justice"

The inaugural Forum will take place from 10-12 August in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania and will convene more than 250 women leaders, entrepreneurs, rising stars and champions to explore the critical role women play in shaping Africa's future. Under the overarching theme of '*Driving Social and Economic Transformation*', the Forum will focus on three core pillars: promoting financial inclusion, increasing market access and driving social change. Through these cross cutting pillars WAA provides a common agenda for women at all levels of the economy to connect, network and harness solutions and innovations to catalyze the actions needed to accelerate women's economic advancement.

"Driving Social and Economic Transformation means that we need to look holistically at women's roles and perceived value. Transformation is not only about numbers, although the numbers of women represented on Boards, as CEOs, or Department Heads is important, we need a transformative agenda which challenges the conceptualisation, social norms, outlook and value given to women and their contribution to the economy and society" adds Machel.

African women are a powerful economic force but continue to face significant barriers across the continent. Today, seventy percent of African women are financially excluded and many lack access to critical markets, resources and services needed to succeed. In a [report](#) released on International Women's Day, the Trust



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found that more than 50 percent of female entrepreneurs in East Africa cite access to finance and markets as major challenges in growing their businesses.

Initial support for the WAA initiative is generously provided by The Intel Foundation and The UPS Foundation. Media partners include: the ABN360 Group, incorporating CNBC Africa and Forbes Africa; the Nation Group and locally based Azam Media Group. These partners share the Trust's belief that advancing women economically is crucial to the health and prosperity of African families, communities and nations.

The Trust is seeking additional partners for the inaugural WAA Forum.

APCO Worldwide, the largest women-owned communications firm in the world, has been selected to be the convening partner for the Women Advancing Africa initiative. With deep roots in Africa and a long history of planning and executing high-profile events around the world, APCO is working closely with the Graça Machel Trust to bring this important, first-of-its-kind initiative to life.

For more information about the Women Advancing Africa Initiative and the Graça Machel Trust, please visit <http://womenadvancingafricaforum.com> and <http://gracamacheltrust.org>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TheGracaMachelTrust>

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### **ABOUT:**

The Graça Machel Trust works across the continent to drive positive change across women's and children's rights, as well as governance and leadership. Through our support of local initiatives and connecting key stakeholders at a regional, national and sub-national level, we help to catalyse action where it is needed. By using our convening power the Trust seeks to amplify the voices of women and children in Africa; influence governance and promote women's contributions and leadership in the economic, social and political development of Africa.

### **ABOUT:**

#### **APCO Worldwide**

Founded in 1984, APCO Worldwide is an independent global communication, stakeholder engagement and business strategy firm with offices in more than 30 major cities throughout the world. We challenge conventional thinking and inspire movements to help our clients succeed in an ever-changing world. Stakeholders are at the core of all we do. We turn the insights that come from our deep stakeholder relationships into forward-looking, creative solutions that always push the boundaries. APCO clients include large multinational companies, trade associations, governments, NGOs and educational institutions. The firm is a majority women-owned business. For more information, please visit [www.apcoworldwide.com](http://www.apcoworldwide.com).

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