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FROM BEIJING TO ACCRA: REIMAGINING GENDER LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

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Thirty years after the landmark *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, the world once again turned its gaze to Beijing as leaders gathered for the 2025 **Global Leaders' Meeting on Women**. The moment was not merely ceremonial—it was a profound reflection on how far nations have come, and how much further they must go to achieve gender equality. Two voices stood out at this gathering: **President Xi Jinping**, articulating China's global vision of women's empowerment within the framework of inclusive modernization, and **President John Dramani Mahama** of Ghana, presenting Africa's pragmatic approach to gender-responsive governance. Together, their messages captured a shifting paradigm—one where **South–South cooperation** is redefining the narrative of gender leadership. This article explores how the “**Beijing–Accra axis**” symbolizes a renewed commitment to global equity, solidarity, and shared progress for women and girls worldwide.

The Beijing Moment: China's Vision for Global Women's Empowerment

In his keynote address at the **Global Leaders' Meeting on Women in Beijing**, President **Xi Jinping** framed gender equality as a cornerstone of both **modernization and global governance reform**. Speaking under the theme “*Carrying Forward the Spirit of the Beijing World Conference on Women and Promoting the New and Accelerated Process for Women's All-Round Development*,” Xi called for renewed global solidarity to advance women's rights amid widening inequality, conflict, and technological disruption.

He outlined **four key proposals** to shape the next chapter of the global women's agenda:

- **Fostering an enabling environment** rooted in peace, stability, and protection of women in conflict zones.
- **Empowering women through innovation and modernization**, ensuring they benefit from the digital and green transitions.
- **Strengthening legal and governance frameworks** that guarantee equal access to education, health, and political participation.
- **Deepening international cooperation**, anchored in the **Global Development Initiative** and a more inclusive multilateral order.

Xi also announced new commitments — including **\$10 million in support to UN Women, 1,000 small-scale livelihood projects**, and a **Global Center for Women's Capacity Building** — underscoring China's resolve to translate vision into tangible action. This approach reflects a model of “**gender modernization with Chinese characteristics**”, blending economic inclusion, innovation, and shared global responsibility.

Ghana's Voice in Beijing: An African Vision for Inclusive Empowerment

In his compelling address at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Women, **President John Dramani Mahama** positioned Ghana as a leading voice for Africa's gender transformation and inclusive governance. Speaking both as **President of the Republic of Ghana** and as the **African Union's Champion for Gender and Women's Empowerment**, Mahama emphasized that the promise of the *Beijing Declaration* “was never just a statement of intent; it was a moral covenant.” He underscored that **no nation can truly progress if half of its population is left behind**, reminding the world that gender equality is both a matter of justice and a catalyst for sustainable development.

Highlighting Ghana's reforms, Mahama detailed a range of transformative initiatives: the **Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024**, mandating 30–50% female representation in public office; the establishment of a **Women's Development Bank** to promote financial inclusion; and targeted programs like **LEAP**, the **Ghana School Feeding Programme**, and **50% microfinance allocations for women entrepreneurs**. These measures, supported by legal instruments such as the **Domestic Violence Act** and the **National Gender Policy (2025–2034)**, represent a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment.

Mahama's message was clear and forward-looking: **Africa's progress depends on women's advancement**, and Ghana intends to lead by example—translating global declarations into local realities.

Converging Pathways: South–South Solidarity on Gender and Development

President Xi Jinping's and President John Mahama's speeches, though delivered from vastly different national contexts, converge on a profound shared vision — that **gender equality is central to modernization, peace, and global progress**. Both leaders articulated a model of development that situates women not as beneficiaries of policy but as **drivers of transformation**. Xi's call for “a community with a shared future for humanity” resonates deeply with Mahama's appeal for “shared prosperity for women and girls worldwide,” marking a new era of **South–South cooperation in gender leadership**.

This convergence reflects the growing alignment between China's **Global Development Initiative (GDI)** and Africa's **Agenda 2063**, both emphasizing inclusivity, equity, and social resilience. Through platforms such as the **Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)**, there is rising potential for collaborative programs on women's leadership, digital inclusion, and

green entrepreneurship. Ghana's experience in policy implementation and China's global capacity-building programs together offer a blueprint for **mutually reinforcing progress**.

In essence, the “Beijing–Accra dialogue” illustrates that the global women's movement is no longer a North–South conversation but a **horizontal partnership** among emerging economies. This South–South solidarity anchors gender equality within broader efforts to reform global governance and democratize development.

Reimagining Gender Leadership in a Changing Global Order

Both President Xi Jinping and President John Dramani Mahama situate **gender leadership** within the shifting contours of a transforming global order. In an age where multilateralism faces unprecedented strain, both leaders converge on the idea that **women's empowerment is essential to rebuilding global cooperation and legitimacy**. Mahama warned of the erosion of a “rules-based international system” and the rise of unilateralism, urging nations to safeguard the hard-won gains of the Beijing Platform. Xi, conversely, reaffirmed China's call for a more **just, equitable, and inclusive system of global governance**, placing women at the center of reform through initiatives like the **Global Governance Initiative** and the **Global Center for Women's Capacity Building**.

This intersection of ideas marks a significant shift—from gender equality as a **social policy agenda** to gender leadership as a **geopolitical and developmental imperative**. In this vision, empowering women becomes an act of global renewal, anchoring peace, innovation, and shared prosperity. For Africa and China alike, gender leadership is emerging as a **new pillar of soft power and diplomacy**, reflecting the values of solidarity, inclusivity, and mutual respect.

The outcome is clear: in a changing global order, **gender equality is not peripheral—it is the new grammar of global leadership**.

Conclusion: The New Gender Compact

The 2025 **Global Leaders' Meeting on Women** in Beijing has done more than commemorate three decades since the landmark Beijing Declaration—it has **redefined global gender politics through a South–South lens**. The complementary visions of Presidents Xi Jinping and John Dramani Mahama reveal that the pursuit of gender equality has evolved from moral advocacy into a **strategic framework for inclusive modernization and shared prosperity**.

From Beijing's pledges of global cooperation to Accra's demonstration of policy-driven inclusion, a new **gender compact** is emerging—one that links empowerment with governance, innovation, and multilateral reform. This “Beijing–Accra continuum” symbolizes a decisive turn in global

development thinking: a world where women's advancement is not an adjunct to progress but its very foundation. The future of leadership, as both presidents affirm, will be measured by how inclusively humanity modernizes.



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