

### **3.0 RATIONALE OF THE PAPER**

Since the founding of the Canadian and African Business Women's Alliance (CAABWA) in 2000, we have been working on developing linkages, not only among businesswomen in African countries and in Canada but with various levels of governments in the countries where CAABWA is.

Championing women entrepreneurs is our organization's vision and mandate. This means finding ways to make sure that women entrepreneurs have the maximum benefit of all opportunities for building and enhancing their businesses through access to national and international markets, credit, resources, training, business development supports and other supports available to all citizens.

When we proposed a partnership with the Centre for Foreign Policy Development on Canadian foreign policies and their impacts on African women, we were hoping to open the doors to the recognition of the need to ensure that Canada's commitments on Gender Equality become integral components of all foreign and trade policies between Canada and Africa.

We are aware that Canada is known to be a champion of women's rights and gender equality at all international conferences and is usually one of the first to sign and ratify international conventions on women's and children's rights. To that end, we hope to compile the existing policies and for developing gender specific foreign and trade policies.

The significance of African women in ensuring the economic participation of Africa in the global market needs to be recognized and understood. It presents the base for policy development, precisely because Africa is embarking on a new partnership with G8 countries and Canada is once again taking the lead in ensuring that the G8 countries respond effectively to the NEPAD initiative.

At the Fifth Global Summit of Women in 1998, Irene Natividad noted that, "Global markets and women are not often used in the same sentence, but increasingly, statistics show that women have economic clout – most visibly as entrepreneurs and most powerfully as consumers".

Gender mainstreaming in Canada's foreign and trade policies is critical to fast track Africa's capacity for international business and Canadian businesses' interest and capacity to do business with Africa.

Fulfillment of our own mandate as a Women's Business organization to facilitate stronger links between businesswomen in Canada and African countries to international political and economic agendas is another reason we undertook the work on Canadian policies. Understanding of the prevailing policies is important to our work as it allows us to better serve our members in their efforts to develop their businesses.