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PRESS RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEES OF AFRICA



ANOCA RECOGNISES OUSTANDING WOMEN





On 10 November 2025 in Bujumbura, Burundi, ANOCA recognised outstanding contributions to women's sport in Africa with a prestigious awards ceremony. Held during the 2025 Gender Equality Forum, the historic Gender Equality Awards celebrated trailblazers driving change in the Continent's Olympic Movement.

Championed by ANOCA President Mustapha BERRAF and the ANOCA Executive Committee, this unprecedented initiative demonstrates the continental institution's resolve to single out women who, by dint of hard work, vision and bold initiatives, are shaping the future of African sport.



DISTINCTIONS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CAREERS

The ceremony honoured key African sports figures, who were recognised for their outstanding contributions to sport development and the promotion of gender equality across the continent.

Award winners included the following three women IOC members who also serve as their respective NOC Presidents: Mrs Lydia Nsekera, President of NOC Burundi and Minister of Sport, a real pioneer, the first woman to sit on the FIFA Board; Mrs Filomena Fortes, President of NOC Cape Verde and the first woman to head this institution since 2014; Mrs Aïcha Garad Ali, President of NOC Djibouti and a key sport development actor in her country.



Also recognised were Mrs Bouchra Hajij, President of the Confederation of African Volleyball (CAVB), the first woman to lead this continental body and Vice President of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), whose visionary leadership has profoundly transformed African volleyball. Another award winner was Mrs Beatrice Ayikoru, Secretary General of the Uganda Olympic Committee (UOC), which award was received on her behalf by UOC President, Donald Rukare.

Additionally, an award was presented to Mrs Salma Mouhali, Vice President of the International Tennis Federation, in recognition of her commitment to the development of tennis and the promotion of sports values.

Speaking on the occasion, ANOCA President, the Honourable Mustapha BERRAF, underscored the symbolic significance of the ceremony:

"***These Gender Equality Awards are not just honorary distinctions. They are a powerful symbol of recognition, a beacon that illuminates the road covered so far and the ground still to be covered.***"



Continuing his address before an audience of distinguished guests, President BERRAF declared emphatically:

"***Your place in sport is non-negotiable, your contribution is invaluable, and your leadership is essential.***"

He also paid tribute to the award winners:

"***The award winners honoured here today embody this truth. They represent the athletes who have conquered world podiums with grace and determination. They represent the coaches, administrators and leaders who, behind the scenes, are building the foundations for a more inclusive and fairer African sport.***"

The ANOCA President reasserted the institution's commitments to significantly increase women's representation in African sports governance structures, ensure equitable access to training and development programmes, and create safe and inclusive sports environments.



"We are committed to making gender equality not just a slogan, but a palpable and measurable reality," insisted Mustapha BERRAF, emphasising that these commitments are «focal to our vision for the future of African sport."

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The gala evening, held in a festive yet solemn atmosphere, featured moving testimonies from award winners, who shared their career experiences, challenges, and victories. Their stories inspired the audience, underscoring that excellence is not gender specific.

The ANOCA President addressed a message of hope to young girls and women of Africa:

"Your dreams are legitimate. Your ambitions are valid. Your place in sport is guaranteed. Let no one to tell you that sport is not for you."



The choice of Burundi as the host country for this historic forum is not fortuitous. Under the leadership of Mrs Lydia Nsekera, the NOC has established itself as a champion of women's causes in sport in Africa and globally.

The Gender Equality Forum, to be held from 10 to 12 November 2025 under the supervision of Mrs Lydia Nsekera, who is also the IOC Gender Equality Commission Chair, is the third edition of this major event in the African Olympic calendar. It brings together key players in the continental sports movement to define concrete and measurable gender equality strategies.

The initiative by the ANOCA President and Executive Committee is part of the implementation of the Association's 2025-2028 gender equality strategy, in tune with IOC Olympic Agenda 2020+5, which aims to achieve a minimum of 30% women's representation in sports governing bodies.



The recognised women embody the new generation of leaders who are reshaping the African sports landscape. They are paving the way for thousands of young girls across the continent who aspire to a career in sport.

Mustapha BERRAF concludes:

"***When we invest in women in sport, we invest in education, health, economic empowerment and social transformation in our communities.***"

Yes, the future of African sport will be built with women, by women and for everyone.










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