



**DECLARATION ON 2015 YEAR OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND
DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AFRICA'S AGENDA 2063**

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We, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, having met at our Twenty Fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 14 to 15 June 2015, on the 2015 Theme "Year of Women's Empowerment towards Africa's Agenda 2063";

Recalling our previous Decisions and Declarations on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in particular the Protocol on the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2003 (Assembly AU/Dec.19(II)), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa in 2004 (Assembly AU/Dec.12 (III)), the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) (Assembly AU/Dec. 229 (XII)), the Fund for African Women (Assembly AU/Dec. 277(XIV)), Malabo Decision on Theme for 2015 Year (Assembly AU/Dec. 539 (XXIII)) and all global policies, namely the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Security Council Resolution Number 1325, among others;

Acknowledging the persistent efforts made in implementation of the AU Gender Architecture above-mentioned at national, regional and continental levels, and the positive and visible results of implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment made by our continent since Beijing 1995;

Also acknowledging the challenges faced in the implementation of many of those Decisions and Declarations, in particular on progress made in attaining the minimum targets of gender equality and women's empowerment in women's socio-economic and political life that should demonstrate Africa's willingness, leadership and commitment to the achievement of goals as enshrined in the 2003 Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa;

Noting with Concern that despite positive achievements registered recently in decision-making, women, the largest proportion of our population, still remain at-risk and impoverished due to the challenges caused by social, economic and political marginalization, gender-based violence and discrimination against women; and **reiterating** our resolve to ending violence against women and girls, and improving access to, and control of, finances, land, education, health, sciences and technology and decision-making in political governance and business enterprises, consistent with our Declaration on Agenda 2063 and our continental Gender Architecture and

our commitments on global initiatives;

Reaffirming our resolve towards ensuring that all categories of our populations, in particular women and young girls, must participate and benefit directly from the growth and transformation opportunities to improve their lives and livelihoods, with continued positive impact on the lives of our citizenry in rural and urban areas, through deliberate and targeted public support;

Reiterating our commitment to the Addis Ababa Declaration on *Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action - Towards a Transformational Change for Women and Girls in Africa*, adopted during the Ninth African Regional Conference on Women in November 2014;

Reflecting that hunger and malnutrition are major causes of risk, impoverishment, and persistent underdevelopment in Africa and causes of poor health, low levels of energy, and mental impairment, all leading to low productivity and low educational attainment, all of which can in turn lead to even greater hunger and malnutrition, and increased economic costs, thereby creating a vicious cycle;

Noting the progress made towards alignment, harmonization and coordination of initiatives and activities of stakeholders and partners with our priorities as defined in the Beijing and Dakar Platforms of Action and **stressing** on the significance of accelerating this momentum;

Recognizing the importance of multi-sectoral engagement and co-ownership of this societal and economic transformation agenda within our public sectors, including agriculture, science and technology, health, peace and security, infrastructure, energy, finance, trade, industry, hence the importance of putting in place a coherent inter-sectoral coordination of the efforts and initiatives in cabinet and other national and regional governance frameworks, for optimizing resource access and control, synergy and maximizing positive outcomes and greater impact;

Further recognizing the complementary roles and responsibilities that should be enhanced among relevant stakeholders, including public sectors, private enterprises – especially with African headquarters, civil society with African leadership, academia, African think-tanks, grassroots and business women, in all formal and informal sectors in driving our shared continental development Agenda 2063;

Reiterating its support to the mandate of the AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to promote the rights of women during conflict, their participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict, and their protection from sexual and gender-based violence;

Welcoming the Recommendations of the Stakeholder's Consultation with AU Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, GIMAC (Gender is my Agenda Campaign) network of civil society organizations, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and UN System, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 20th to 23rd January 2015 at the AUC Headquarters, and in particular their recommendations calling for our Assembly to consider adopting commitments along specific and concrete priorities.

We hereby adopt the following Declaration:

I. COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION, AND BENEFIT FROM FORMAL AGRICULTURE/AGRIBUSINESS VALUE-CHAINS

We commit to enhance women's access and full inclusion in agriculture and agribusiness, as contributors and beneficiaries; and to this end, we resolve

- a) AU Member States to continuously orient policy and decision makers to understand the important role that women play in development, and specifically in agribusiness, agricultural value chain, food security, nutrition, and care, by putting in place mechanisms for the empowerment of women;
- b) AU Member States to implement women's right to access, control, ownership and benefit from financial resources, including access to public procurement processes in agribusiness, productive assets, including land, enabling basic infrastructure, education, information and skills development, innovative technologies and practices, to capacitate and develop women's economic empowerment in agribusiness;
- c) AU Member States to intensify initiatives to create a conducive environment for women to conduct agribusiness and the agricultural value chain through prevention and responding to conflict on the Continent, addressing, adapting and mitigating climate change impacts, and addressing the impact of epidemics and natural disasters;
- d) AU Member States to facilitate the development of agribusiness and agricultural value chains through mechanisation, technological innovation and skills development for women;
- e) AU Member States to reintroduce agriculture as a field of study, including agribusiness and agricultural value chain, of the education curriculum;
- f) AU Member States and the Commission to ensure that the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) promotes the empowerment of women in agribusiness/agricultural value chains;
- g) AU Member States to integrate gender responsive indicators in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Results Framework of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and technologies in agribusiness and agricultural value chains, and support the *Campaign* to progressively banish the hand held hoe to the museum.

II. COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HEALTH

We commit to enhance women's access to health; and to this end, we resolve:

- a) To take into account women sensitive issues to emerging threats such as Ebola and other impediments to Africa's development, which disproportionately have a negative impact on women and girls;
- b) To establish mechanisms to identify survivors of sexual and gender- based abuses and provide psycho-social and economic care during conflict and post-conflict situations;
- c) To ensure that Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights of African women are implemented and mutually accounted for in the existing commitments to women's reproductive health and rights, as adopted by African Heads of State in the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) in 2003, and the Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in 2006; and
- d) To ensure ending of the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, as part of the Agenda 2063, has an inclusive, human rights approach that leaves no-one behind; including children, adolescents, women of child bearing age, female key populations, such as women and girls in conflict and post- conflict settings.

III. COMMITMENT TO PUSHING FORWARD WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

We commit to empower women at all economic levels, including women at-risk and impoverished located in rural and urban areas, with access to, and control of, finances; and to this end, we resolve:

- a) AU Heads of State and Government to place the Gender Agenda at the centre of their Development Agenda, which should match allocation of adequate resources, based on a fixed percentage of the budget, with the elevated location of the Ministry responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs in order to enable Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs to drive the programmes of gender equality and women's empowerment; and
- b) AU Member States, as we move towards the adoption of the Post 2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, to create and mainstream mechanisms to ensure women's access to finances, financial and entrepreneurial skills development, to move away from limited ring fenced women's funds, and to challenge the financial institutions to have minimum quota of 50% to finance women for them to grow from micro to macro business.

IV. COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING THE AGENDA ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

We commit to push forward the women's full and effective participation in conflict prevention, management, peace-building, reconstruction and negotiation; and to this end, we resolve:

- a) To develop, implement and report on National and Regional Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 to accelerate the Women, Peace and Security Agenda;
- b) To develop and implement a Plan of Action towards Silencing the Guns by 2020 for promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict rebuilding;
- c) To establish mechanisms to identify survivors of sexual and gender-based abuses and provide psycho-social and economic care during conflict and post-conflict situations;
- d) To eliminate impunity on all forms of violence against women and girls;
- e) To facilitate access to justice, rehabilitation and recovery, especially for child soldiers, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; and,
- f) To install a monument at the Africa Union Headquarters honouring women who have contributed to the African anti-colonial and anti-apartheid liberation movements, and the resolution of conflicts on the continent.

V. COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

We commit to implement all AU policies on gender parity and participation of women in judicial processes and institutions, especially in governance and at decision-making levels, such as the Supreme Court, Constitutional Courts, and Regional Courts; and to this end, we resolve:

- a) To ensure that women are part of the electoral machinery, including Institutions that address violence before, during, and after elections.

VI. COMMITMENT TO ENHANCING WOMEN AND GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

We commit to enhance women's and girls' access to education, science and technology and to this end we resolve;

- a) To increase education and training investment in institutions/enterprises, accredited for quality, in science and technology (S&T), information and communications technology (ICT),

engineering, mathematics, agriculture and agribusiness, nutrition , and law with focus on women and innovation; and

- b) To end child marriage, also referred to as defilement, in Africa through adoption of the Common African Position on Ending Child Marriage, develop and implement comprehensive action plans as an indicator for monitoring Agenda 2063 for girls' empowerment and well-being.

VII. COMMITMENT TO MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO ACTIONS AND RESULTS

We commit to systematic data gathering, regular review, and progress monitoring of implementation of Agenda 2063 and its 10-Year Action Plan using the Solemn Declaration Index (SDI), developed by the GIMAC and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); and to this end, we resolve

- a) To conduct the five year progress review of the Africa Women's Decade that involves tracking, monitoring and reporting on progress;
- b) To foster alignment, harmonization and coordination among multi-sectorial efforts and multi-institutional platforms for peer review, mutual learning and mutual accountability;
- c) To strengthen national and regional institutional capacities, including technology software, equipment and uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for data collection, analysis, generation, and management and knowledge generation and dissemination, that supports evidence based planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and,
- d) To share high-impact best practices and solutions with a focus on scalability/technology divisibility and replicability to improve the lives of women in the diverse settings of Africa.

VIII. STRENGTHENING THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION TO SUPPORT DELIVERY ON THESE COMMITMENTS

We will strengthen the capacity of the African Union Commission to help it fulfil the growing roles and mandates that we have ascribed through this Declaration, as well as other relevant previous Declarations and Decisions; and to this end we invite the Chairperson of the Commission to submit a proposal with a view to enhancing the institutional capacity of the lead Department as well as other relevant units, for consideration and approval by the July 2015 Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.

IX. A CALL FOR ACTION

We commit to an expedient process of translation of these economic, transformational commitments into results; and to this end, we call upon:

- a) The AUC to work closely with Member States and RECs to enhance the implementation of the call to action, and to develop an implementation strategy and roadmap to facilitate translation of the seven (7) aspirations of Agenda 2063's vision and goals of the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) and the *Addis Ababa Declaration on Accelerating the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action - Towards a Transformational Change for Women and Girls in Africa* (Beijing+20), and the Communiqué of the Stakeholders' Consultation on AU 2015 Theme as well as the Johannesburg Declaration and Call for Action on Financial Inclusion of Women in Agribusiness adopted by the Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs on 12 June 2015;
- b) AU Member States to review and evaluate the implementation of the call to action every 2 years and to link it to other reporting mechanisms.