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REPORT OF THE STC ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
HELD IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA IN 2015
AND IN KHARTOUM, OCTOBER 2015

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**CONTINUATION OF THE FIRST AFRICAN UNION SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

18 January 2016

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

**STC/WGDD/Min/Rpt.
Original: English**

REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL SESSION

**18 JANUARY 2016
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the Decision of Assembly/AU/Dec.365(XVII) adopted at the 17th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in July 2011, and the Decision EX. CL/Dec.701(XXI) adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of Executive Council of the Africa Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2012, the African Union Commission convened the First Ministerial Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women Empowerment.

2. The STC on Gender and Women Empowerment comprises Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs or such other Ministers or authorities duly accredited by the Governments of Member States.

I. ATTENDANCE

3. The following Member States were in attendance: Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, , Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea – Conakry, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, The Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were also in attendance in Khartoum: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

5. The following African and International Organizations and Agencies participated in the meeting in Khartoum: UNWOMEN and the Embassy of Kazakhstan based in Ethiopia.

III. OPENING SESSION

6. The following statements were made in Khartoum:

Master of Ceremony: H.E. Mashair Aldawalab, Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Republic of Sudan

7. The Minister welcomed all present to the 1st Specialised Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Empowerment and to the Republic of The Sudan. He

highlighted that the role of the STC is to contribute to the work of the African Union in realising the aspirations of the African women for gender equality and women's empowerment through implementing the policies that have been adopted.

8. The Minister recalled the 50th anniversary of the African Union, the struggle for independence by Africa's forefathers and the Declaration by African Heads of State of 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and indicated that Africa will surely achieve the full objectives of its development agenda.

9. The Minister reiterated Sudan's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and announced that the country is resolute in promoting the rights of women. This is demonstrated by among others, President Al Bashir's participation in various AU summit and the representation of women in various sectors, as well as the guarantee of women's rights in the Constitution of the country and national legislation.

10. The Minister reminded Member States that while this gathering will discuss gender equality and how to safeguard the rights of women, full equality is yet to be achieved. Member States have to implement the rights of women guaranteed by their constitution and national laws. The meeting is holding here today to renew African solidarity as one of Sudan's objectives is to promote solidarity amongst all African states and for the implementation of all AU policies. The meeting will discuss how to achieve the development goals of 2063, the implementation of 2015 Declaration.

Statement the Chairperson of AU Bureau of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affair

11. Honourable Deputy Minister AES Damasane, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development of Zimbabwe delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Bureau of Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs.

12. In her remarks, the Deputy Minister welcomed all participants to Sudan and specifically to this inaugural meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Empowerment. She underscored the responsibility of the Ministers gathered here today in shaping and setting the tone for all future STCs on Gender and Women Affairs.

13. The Deputy Minister highlighted that the task of this meeting is to ensure that the Africa we want as guided by the African Union Agenda 2063, and in particular Aspiration 6 is realised. Therefore, the plans that will be made in this meeting will have an impact on many generations to come. In that regard, she emphasised that the onus is on this meeting to ensure that the work on gender and women's empowerment yields tangible results for women on the Continent.

14. In closing, she underscored that the outcomes of this meeting will have a bearing on the successful implementation of Agenda 2063.

Statement by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, AUC Chairperson

15. Ms. Ben Ali, the AG. Director of the AUC Women, Gender and Development delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

16. On behalf of the AUC Chairperson, Ms Ben Ali expressed deepest gratitude to the President of the Republic of Sudan, His Excellency Mr. Oumar Al Bashir, the Government of the Sudan and especially the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and all the people of the Sudan for accepting to host the 1st AU STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment.

17. She thanked the Government for all efforts put in place in preparing for this STC to ensure that it is a success. She also thanked the Republic of Sudan for the hospitality extended to all the delegations since arrival in Khartoum.

18. This meeting is a milestone for gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa as it is a key opportunity to reflect on what has worked and what still needs to be done in the continent to achieve gender equality. The audience was informed that the implementation of all adopted AU policies on gender equality and women's empowerment should not only be limited to the AU Commission, but should involve all RECs and Member State to accelerate greater results on women's socio-economic and political rights.

19. She stressed the need for Member States to enhance women's rights in various sectors and also to sensitize women about their rights so that they can claim their rights. She recalled the great role played by the private sector, development partners and Civil Society Organizations to support gender equality and women's empowerment at national and regional levels.

20. She highlighted that women's empowerment is key to the achievement of Agenda 2063 and underscored that the AU Heads of State and Government have adopted 2016 as the year of Human Rights focusing on women's rights following the theme for 2015. She stressed that these all commitments should be fully implemented for women to enjoy their equal rights.

21. In conclusion, she called all Member States and other stakeholders to work together to make the African Women's Decade a success and especially for grassroots women in the continent.

Statement by H.E. Dr Jalal Yousuf Al Digair, Representative of the President of the Republic of the Sudan

22. On behalf of the President of The Sudan, H.E. President Oumar Al Bashir, the representative welcomed the delegates from Member States, the African Union Commission on behalf of the President and the people of Sudan

23. He expressed his appreciation and that of his Government for the opportunity to host the first STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment in Sudan. He recognised the efforts of the AUC with regards to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the continent.

24. He noted that this meeting is taking place when Africa is facing numerous challenge, including conflicts, climate change and other development challenges.

25. Recalling the African Heads of State's decision to dedicate 2015 as the year of women, and the African Women Decades he reiterated Sudan's commitment and support to all continental instruments and decisions relative to gender equality and women's empowerment and the country's decision to host this meeting as a demonstration of such commitment.

26. Referring to Marie and Aisha's roles in the Koran and the importance of religion, he described as a fallacy, the idea that Islam is an impediment to the promotion of women. He highlighted women's leadership in Sudanese and African Culture and drew attention to the rights that women have in Sudan. He also stated that society in general respect tradition and culture and is apprehensive to laws.

27. He also shared information about the Sudanese National Dialogue and programs to enhance the promotion and protection of women's rights. He concluded by reiterating his appreciation and stated that it is a distinct honor for his country to host this meeting

28. The following statements were made during the Continuation of the STC in Addis Ababa :

The opening Ceremony of the continuation of the 1st STC on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment was chaired by H.E. Mashair AL DAMALAB, Minister of Welfare and Social Security of the Republic of The Sudan and facilitated by Mrs. Mahawa Kaba-Wheeler, Director of Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union Commission (AUC).

29. The Director welcomed the Ministers and delegates to the meeting while recalling the unfinished business of the STC in Khartoum. She specially welcomed the presence of H.E. Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner for Trade and Industry who

represented H.E. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

30. In her welcome Statement, H.E. Madam Zenebu Tadesse, the Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia welcomed participants to Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian Minister observed that Africa is showing an ever increasing commitment for ensuring the rights, equality and empowerment of women, who for a very long time have been tolling in various socio-economic and political challenges that deterred their progress and threatened their wellbeing.

31. She underscored that African governments now recognise that there cannot be any meaningful and sustainable progress in economic, social and political fields without the effective and equal participation of women in all national endeavors. It was on that basis that the African Union declared 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Africa's Agenda 2063 and 2016 as "the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women".

32. In her Opening Statement, H.E Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner for Trade and Industry who represented H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, welcomed all delegates to the continuation meeting of the 1st Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women's Empowerment. She expressed her profound gratitude to the Republic of The Sudan, and in particular the Minister of Welfare and Social Security, of the Republic of The Sudan, H.E. Mashair ALDAMALAB, for hosting the first meeting of the STC in Khartoum in November 2015 and for the unmatched hospitality extended to the delegates throughout their stay in Khartoum.

33. Recalling the June 2014 Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which requested the African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the bureaus of various sectoral ministerial conferences, to pursue and finalise the process of operationalizing the remaining STCs by December 2014, the meeting was encouraged to complete the outstanding business from the Sudan meeting to ensure that the STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment was operationalized. It was highlighted that the operationalization of this STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment will contribute greatly in ensuring that gender and women's affairs remain on the priority list of the agenda of the African Union.

34. In conclusion, she requested all delegates to concretise into action all commitments made in connection with gender equality and women's empowerment to better the lives of African women.

35. In her Welcome Remarks, H.E Mashair ALDAMALAB, Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Republic of the Sudan welcomed all delegate and expressed gratitude to the African Union Commission and AU Member States for attending the meeting.

36. The Minister highlighted that African Women have a great role to play in society. She mentioned that Africa should intensify its efforts in its commitment for gender equality and women's empowerment in the year 2016 and beyond. She added that 2016 being the African Year of Human Rights with special emphasis on Women's Rights, will provide a good opportunity for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

37. She highlighted that this meeting is important as it will elect the Bureau of the STC, adopt the Rules of Procedure and adopt the Report of the Experts Meeting.

38. In conclusion, the Minister welcomed the delegates once again and wished them fruitful deliberations.

IV. THE ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

39. The Draft Agenda and Work Programme were presented and adopted (the Agenda and the Work Programme are attached).

V. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

40. The following members of the Bureau were elected:

- a) Chairperson:
- b) 1st Vice - Chairperson:
- c) 2nd Vice - Chairperson:
- d) 3rd Vice - Chairperson:
- e) Rapporteur:

V. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXPERTS MEETING

41. The Ministers considered and adopted the Report of the Experts Meeting with inputs, recommendations, amendments and questions on the following points:



**WG16573
Annex**

African Union

8th AU GENDER PRE-SUMMIT ON THE MARGINS OF THE 26th AU SUMMIT

***17-21 JANUARY 2016
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA***

***"2016: African Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights
of Women"***

COMMUNIQUE

COMMUNIQUE

We, Ministers of the African Union (AU) in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs, representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), intergovernmental conferences, members of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) network, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UN Agencies, African Development Bank (AfDB), development partners and private sector organizations meeting at the 8th AU Gender Pre-Summit under the AU Year 2016 Theme: "*African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the Rights of Women*", held from 17 to 21 January 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the African Union Commission (AUC) Headquarters at the margins of the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union;

1. **Refer** to the AU theme for 2016 "*African Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights of Women*";
2. **Reaffirm** the content of the 10 Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), the African Women's Decade (2010–2020), the Beijing +20 Declaration and Plan of Action the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and other related Resolutions, the Sandton Declaration of Heads of State and Government on 2015 "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Africa's Agenda 2063", and other Gender policies and frameworks;
3. **Appreciate** the commitment by AU Member States to declare 2016 as the: "*African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the Rights of Women*";
4. **Recall** the 27th session of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) held from 17 to 18 January 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) under the theme, "*Looking towards 2020: Securing Women's Rights through Gender Equality and Silencing the Guns in Africa*;"
5. **Welcome** the election of the Bureau of the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and express our appreciation to the Government of Sudan for hosting the inaugural session of the STC;
6. **Acknowledge** existing global, continental, regional and national frameworks on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and recommit to the implementation and mutual accountability of those existing frameworks without renegotiating their content;
7. **Aware** of efforts to promote GEWE around the continent, yet women's access to basic and quality education, ownership and control of assets, access to public procurements, opportunities for scalable entrepreneurship, inclusion in financing

frameworks, and representation in decision-making positions among other social, economic and political rights still remain severely limited;

8. **Note** that the implementation of existing GEWE frameworks still remains a challenge for most African countries due to their slow pace of ratification and domestication as well as the inadequacy of technical and for financial resources to operationalize GEWE agenda; and underlining that only three (3) Member States have reported on measures taken to implement the Maputo Protocol as required by Article 26;
9. **Recognize** existing and emerging threats to Africa's development, including climate change, conflicts, terrorism, the illicit proliferation of arms and health pandemics (Ebola, HIV/AIDS) and the disproportionately negative impact they have on women's lives and well-being; and underscore women's sexual and reproductive health plays a critical role in their lives and that large numbers of African women and girls continue to die from pregnancy-related causes annually;
10. **Appreciate** the commitment of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to GEWE, having devoted two themes in 2015 and 2016, respectively, to this key development priority, and notably in adopting (six) 6 key priority areas on the socio-economic and political rights of women;

We, Ministers of the African Union (AU) in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs, representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), intergovernmental conferences, and members of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) network, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UN Agencies, African Development Bank (AfDB), development partners and private sector organizations therefore commit to:

11. **Assess** progress on women's participation and decision making in politics, public office, the judiciary and other public spheres at all levels; identifying the challenges and barriers hindering their effective participation as well as developing and implementing strategies to accelerate -the implementation of these commitments;.
12. **Facilitate** consultations and agreement on the opportunities, gaps and solutions for enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment and ensuring that women are at the centre of sustainable development, peace and security, regional integration and economic growth in Africa.
13. **Identify** how national regulations and policies, on one hand, and practices from financial institutions, investors, and businesses on the other, can be more closely aligned to improve women's financial inclusion, effective participation in the formal and informal economies, strengthen and strengthening gender budgeting processes, increase gender sensitivity of macro-economic policies and strengthen women's access to public procurements;.
14. **Monitoring** trends in migration and displacement, particularly challenges and their impact on women, , refugees and internally displaced persons, girls as well

as identifying reflect on best practices to address the their specific vulnerabilities and strengthen their capacities of this target group in Africa and in the countries of destination and transit; and to adopt international conventions on trafficking to prevent cross-border trafficking;

15. **Accelerate** the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the continent through the establishment of a continental results framework to monitor and report on national and regional Women, Peacewomen, peace, and Security commitments at all levels, learning from the outcomes of the Global Study on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, among other key studies, and in collaboration with RECs, the UN, and civil society;.
16. **Share** status updates and devise solutions to increase the representation of girls and women in Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and in Technical Industrial Vocational Education and Training (TIVET);
17. **Strengthen** the implementation of existing instruments on sexual and gender-based violence resulting from ongoing existing discriminatory practices, including Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) such as child, early and forced marriages; ensuring the ratification, domestication and implementation of the articles of the Maputo Protocol related to sexual and reproductive health and reinforcing the role society should play to end violence against women and girls;
18. **Provide** an opportunity for various stakeholders to consult and address the challenges, which hinder progress in achieving women's land and property rights in Africa, as well as identify means to advancing relevant solutions with a view to securing greater commitment towards promoting best practices.

We recommend as follows:

AUC, RECs and Member States to:

19. **Implement**, in line with Article 4 (L) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, gender parity at all levels of decision-making at the AU Organs. The AUC should guarantee an alternating system between men and women in the position of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Commission. We commend the AU for implementing the gender parity rule at the level of Commissioners and similar efforts at that for Directors;
20. **Commit** to designing, in collaboration with all stakeholders, new Gender Strategy which will reflect priorities in Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and COP 21 and aligned with existing GEWE frameworks, as well as developing a more robust Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Mechanisms in support of said strategy;
21. **Share** the outcomes of the 8th AU Gender Pre-Summit during the 27th Ordinary Sessions of the Assembly of the African Union;

22. **Assess** the implementation of commitments made on GEWE in Africa, with specific reference to the 2015 theme of “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Africa’s Agenda 2063” and the African Women’s Decade (2010-2020), and develop follow-up intervention strategies to accelerate the implementation of commitments on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment;
23. **Recognize** and value unpaid care and domestic work predominantly done by women by enforcing existing laws, raising awareness with private sector actors on the protection of their rights and implementing programmes to help them graduate to better conditions of work;
24. **Implement** and strengthen accountability on existing decisions, policies and frameworks for the protection of women and girls’ rights, and in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders continue to raise awareness and develop a common strategy on the implementation of the 2016 theme of “African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the Rights of Women”.
25. **Organize** a continental Campaign on the ratification and domestication of the Maputo Protocol and eradication of HTPs, align national legislations to reflect women’s sexual and reproductive health rights, create a legal fund for women victims of human rights violations; hold perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse accountable, and ensure women’s effective inclusion and participation in peace dialogues;
26. **Increase** budget allocations to programmes and organisations dedicated to GEWE and strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to ensure effective mainstreaming of priority actions in all areas;
27. **Adopt** an integrated approach to reinvigorate dialogue between stakeholders participation, in playing a leadership role in public office by 2020. on the opportunities, gaps and solutions for enhancing women’s economic empowerment and ensure that women are at the centre of sustainable development, peace, regional integration and economic growth initiatives in Africa;
28. Engage practitioners, policy-makers, civil society organizations, and a broad range of stakeholders to review the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda on the continent, learn from various experiences and challenges, and reflect critically on what is needed to accelerate implementation and monitoring at all levels, as well as on the way forward;
29. **Increase** resource allocations and create enabling conditions to increase women’s participation and visibility in women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET);
30. **Address** challenges which hinder progress in achieving women’s land and property rights in Africa, as well as identify and promote practical approaches to

addressing these challenges with a view to securing commitment towards promoting proven models;

31. **Intensify** efforts to increase women's political participation and their appointment in decision-making positions, especially in non-traditional fields such as the military and their share of public procurements, industry and support their efforts to scale-up their enterprises;
32. **Congratulate** the African Union Commission, under the leadership of the Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, for the adoption and implementation of Agenda 2063 and its 10-Year Implementation Plan, which recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical driver for the transformation and development of Africa in all the seven (7) Aspirations of Africa's Agenda 2063;
33. **Thank** the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for convening this Pre-Summit, and the AfDB, UNDP, UNWomen, and UNECA for their support and contribution, as well as the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for its hospitality.

Adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 20th January 2016

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