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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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**REPORT OF THE 5TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE STC ON GENDER
EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT,
23-27 NOVEMBER 2020, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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**SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
FIFTH ORDINARY SESSION
27 NOVEMBER 2020,
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**STC5/WGDD/MIN/Rpt.
Original: English**

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF MINISTERS

(Virtual meeting via Zoom)

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF MINISTERS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Ministerial segment of the Fifth Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (STC on GEWE) was held on 27 November 2020. The meeting took place online via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. The meeting followed the same format of the Experts meetings and prioritized statutory matters as well as urgent and important AU Gender Agenda issues that required Ministerial consideration, adoption and decisions.

II. ATTENDANCE

3. The following 46 Member States were in attendance: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Kingdom of Eswatini, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

III. SESSION I: OPENING REMARKS

4. The following remarks and speeches were made:

Opening Remarks: H.E. Dr. Mèdessè Véronique Tognifode Mewanou, STC Chairperson and Minister of Social Affairs and Microfinance, Republic of Benin

5. H.E Dr. Mèdessè Véronique Tognifodé Mewanou, Minister of Social Affairs and Microfinance of the Republic of Benin and Chairperson of the STC on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, welcomed the participants to the ministerial meeting, noting that the STC has convened in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and at a time of observing the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.
6. The negative impact of COVID-19 was highlighted, including how it exacerbated violence against women and girls such as sexual violence, child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and domestic violence.
7. African governments were called to take measures to limit the traumatic effects of the pandemic on women by, among others, extending income support to vulnerable women, improving access to health care, establishing and improving prevention services to respond to violence against women and also supporting the participation of women in leadership and decision-making processes in COVID-19 responses.
8. Gratitude was extended to the outgoing Bureau under the leadership of H.E. Beatrice Lomeya Atilite, Minister of Gender, Family and Children of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for the excellent work done over the past two (2) years and assured that the new Bureau will spare no effort to promote and protect the rights of women in Africa.

Welcome Remarks: H.E. Filsan Abdi, Minister of Women, Children and Youth, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

9. H.E. Filsan Abdullahi, noted that under normal circumstances, she would be welcoming Ministers to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, however, due to the current circumstances necessitated by COVID-19 participants are welcomed to the virtual meeting.
10. The African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) was appreciated for organizing the 5th Specialized Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which is Important as it provides an opportunity to assess the accomplishments that Africa has made in reaching women and in sharing best practices and lessons.
11. The critical importance of coming up with new and improved approaches to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls was underscored as well as ensuring that adequate financing is available for the strategies and initiatives that are developed.
12. Member States were urged to remain unified during this challenging pandemic and to remain steadfast on achieving the goals set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

Statement: H.E. lipinge Eunice, President, Pan-African Women's Organisation

13. H.E. Eunice lipinge, newly-elected President of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) expressed appreciation for the invitation to address the 5th STC and to the AU Assembly for granting PAWO status of Specialized Agency.
14. The key resolutions and a declaration adopted during the PAWO 10th Congress and its participation in this STC meeting demonstrate the commitment of the organization to continue leading the continental agenda for women and participating in all AU decision making platforms and events of AUC on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
15. The progress that Africa has made in realizing gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa was acknowledged, noting that more still needs to be done, including in terms of capacity building, gender research, gender disaggregated data, gender awareness-raising and resource mobilization.
16. Concerns were raised about the increase of gender-based violence during the Covid-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need to ensure that violence against women and girls is dealt with adequately.
17. AU Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs and the AUC's WGDD were appreciated for supporting PAWO and for ensuring that the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment is advanced.

Statement: H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson, African Union Commission

18. The Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed appreciation for the leadership and commitment of the Ministers during this time of the

COVID-19 pandemic and especially for their efforts to ensure that gender equality is taken into account effectually in all COVID-19 responses and recovery plans.

19. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the AU has committed to work alongside Member States to identify and implement solutions that help prevent the spread of the virus and the loss of lives. Those joined efforts have materialized with the creation of two funds namely the Covid-19 response fund and the AU COVID-19 Solidarity Fund.
20. As 2020 marks the end of the first African Women's Decade, Member States were congratulated for their commitment which led to large-scale projects and initiatives, guaranteeing concrete results including the Ratification of the Maputo Protocol by 42 AU Member States, the increase of the number of women in the political arena and the creation of the Fund for African Women which will be transformed into a Trust Fund.
21. The theme chosen for the new African Women's Decade on "*Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women*", reflects the continent's determination to strengthen efforts and promote the full emancipation of women.
22. AU Member States continue to develop innovative tools, AU instruments and strategies to strengthen gender equality and empower women and girls in Africa. In that regard, the 13 AU Member States who have not ratified the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights were requested to take steps to ratify the instrument.
23. Ministers were also encouraged to intensify efforts and take courageous actions to transform the African continent in a positive way and meet the goals set in Agenda 2063, *the Africa We Want*.

IV. SESSION II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE EXPERTS' MEETING

24. The Work Programme was presented and adopted (Annex 1).

V. SESSION III: CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE EXPERTS' REPORT ON STATUTORY MATTERS

25. Consideration and adoption of Experts reports on:

A. 2019 Reports of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA)

26. Following the consideration of the report of experts on 2019 Reports of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the Minister adopted the following draft decisions for onward transmission to AU Policy Organs :

a. Draft Decision on the Universal Ratification, Domestication and Implementation of the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights

27. The Ministers:

RECOGNIZE the adoption of the New African Women's Decade 2020-2030 as the Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion at the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;

RECOGNISE the 42 Member States that have ratified the Maputo Protocol and **ENCOURAGE** the 13 Member States that have not yet ratified to take appropriate measures at national level and submit their instruments of ratification to the African Union Commission;

ALSO ENCOURAGE Member States that have ratified the Maputo Protocol to adopt the necessary measures to domesticate and implement it in accordance with the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 on "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" and the outcomes of the virtual consultations on the Maputo Protocol held on November 17 to 18, 2020 including by submitting periodic reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

b. Draft Decision on Women, Peace and Security

28. The Ministers:

TAKE NOTE of the first Africa Forum on Women, Peace and Security convened virtually from 10 to 12 November 2020 and its Declaration and Call for Action on Women, Peace and Security;

CONGRATULATE the African Union Commission's Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security for convening this first Africa Forum on WPS, and for ensuring that women's rights to peace and security as provided for in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa remain high on the priority of the African Union;

SUPPORT the convening of a Peace Forum for Africa, led by Women and supported and attended by Africa Heads of State and Government to explore peaceful avenues for conflict resolution and enhance the role of women in advancing the achievement of sustainable peace in Africa; and

FURTHER SUPPORT the operationalization of the decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council in its 803rd, 887th and 951st meetings to institutionalize the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, with allocation of adequate and stable financial and human resources for the acceleration of the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Africa

B. AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

29. The meeting received a presentation of the Experts Report on the AU Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

30. Following the presentation of the experts report, some Member States raised concerns regarding the definition of 'Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)' and proposed to amend it and replace with 'Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRH&RR)' in alignment to the language in the Maputo Protocol.

31. The legal counsel representative provided a legal opinion, which recalls that the Maputo Protocol is the main legal instrument that needs to be aligned to. She further noted that the Maputo Protocol is binding only to the Member States who have ratified it.

32. After receiving the legal opinion provided by the office of the Legal Counsel, the Ministers -:
- a. Requested the secretariat to replace the definition in the strategy with 'Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights (SRH&RR)' as per the terminology in the Maputo Protocol.
 - b. Requested the Secretariat to ensure that appropriate terminology appears in the document in all the languages.
 - c. The Ministers approved the Strategy with the language that is aligned to Maputo Protocol.

C. Final Review Report of the African Women's Decade on Grassroots Approaches to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: 2010-2020

33. After presentation and consideration of the experts report on Final Review Report of the African Women's Decade on Grassroots Approaches to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: 2010-2020, the Ministers adopted the following draft decision for onward transmission to AU policy organs:

Draft Decision on AWD 2010-2020

34. The Ministers,

TAKE NOTE of the Final Review Report of the African Women's Decade (AWD) on Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: 2010-2020

CONGRATULATE Member States who have submitted their reports on AWD and **FURTHER CONGRATULATE** them for successfully implementing the 10 themes of the Decade

ENDORSE the report of the Final Review Report of the African Women's Decade for onward transmission to AU Policy organs

D. African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women: 2020-2030

35. The Meeting received an update on African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women: 2020-2030.
36. The Ministers took note of the update and committed to support the development of the continental strategy on Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion.

E. Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI)

37. After consideration of the experts report on Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index, the Ministers adopted the following draft decision:

Draft Decision on Maputo Scorecard and Index

38. The Ministers of Member States that ratified the Maputo Protocol

RECALL that the broad objective of the Maputo Protocol is to promote the emancipation of African women and gender equality, in order to ensure that women and

men have equal access to factors needed for their equal and unhindered participation in development and other processes that shape and define their conditions of life and work.

WELCOME the introduction of the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index as positive developments in the AU Commission regarding the mainstreaming of gender issues into all the initiatives of the African Union.

CALL UPON the African Union:

- i. To adopt the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI) as monitoring and evaluation tool for the assessment of the implementation of the Maputo Protocol in order to facilitate the advancement of women as an integral part of all social, political, economic and development initiatives undertaken by AU.
- ii. To set in motion the process leading up to the Declaration of July 11 as the Maputo Implementation Day.
- iii. Empower the African Union Commission and in collaboration with the African Union Commission on Human and People's Right and other entities to use the Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI) to produce a Biennial Status Report on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by Member States.

F. COVID 19 and Gender Equality

39. After the presentation and consideration of the experts report on COVID 19 and Gender Equality, the Ministers took note of the update on Gender Equality and COVID-19.

SESSION IV: CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE EXPERTS' REPORT ON KEY UPDATES AND BRIEFINGS

40. The Meeting received the Experts' Report on Briefings and Updates as follows:

A. Violence Against Women and Girls

41. After the presentation of the experts report on Violence Against Women and Girls, recommending to adopt a decision to request AU Member States to start negotiating the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls for adoption by AU Policy Organs. The Ministers:
- a) **TAKE NOTE** of the briefing
 - b) **REAFFIRM** their commitment to end all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa
 - c) **COMMEND** the AU Commission for its efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment.
42. The delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt informed the meeting that it did not receive mandate from its government to request the development of a new convention and therefore expressed a reservation to the recommendation. The meeting acknowledged the reservation made and adopted the recommendation.

B. Generation Equality, Beijing +25 and CSW 64

43. The Ministers received a presentation of the Expert reports on Generation Equality, Beijing +25 and CSW 64 and took note of the update.

C. African Women Leaders Network

44. Following the consideration of the Experts report on African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), the Ministers took note of the briefing and committed to support the implementation of the National Chapters.

V. DATE AND VENUE OF THE 6th STC ON GEWE

45. The Ministers received a presentation on the date and venue of the next STC and proposed the next STC to take place online on the 26 November 2021.

VI. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT STC REPORT

46. The report was adopted as amended, with a reservation from the Arab Republic of Egypt on paragraph 38.

VII. CLOSING REMARKS

a. Remarks: Ms. Lehau Victoria Maloka, WGDD Ag. Director

47. In her closing remarks, Ms. Lehau Victoria Maloka, the WGDD Ag. Director congratulated the Chairperson of the STC Bureau for the manner in which she conducted the meeting. Acknowledging the robust discussions and often divergent opinions expressed by Member States, the Ag. Director appreciated the Chairperson for her leadership and guidance in leading the meeting to reach common ground.
48. Ministers were appreciated for attending the STC in high numbers, which is a demonstration of their commitment to advance the AU Gender Agenda.
49. The AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Madam Bineta Diop was appreciated for participating in the STC and for her unwavering support to the AU Gender Agenda.
50. Ministers were motivated to continue working for the women, young women and young men of Africa and to ensure that they bequeath to them a more gender-balanced continent in line with the aspirations of Agenda 2063.
51. As gender equality is a “collective responsibility” Ministers were invited to work with all stakeholders to push for the realization of women’s human rights.
52. WGDD remains committed to work together with Ministers and all other stakeholders to serve women, young girls and young boys of Africa.

b. Closing Remarks: H.E. Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security

53. H.E Binta Diop, the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, speaking through Ambassador Catherine Mogaka, commended the Chairperson of the STC for the manner in which she conducted the meeting and further expressed

gratitude to all the Ministers in charge of Gender Affairs for their commitment despite challenges arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

54. The 5th STC on GEWE has adopted a number of decisions on matters of significance to the betterment of the lives of women and girls, and adherence to their full implementation will have a positive effect on the wellbeing of women and girls and on peace, security and sustainable development in Africa.
55. The Office of the Special Envoy's commitment was reaffirmed to continuing advocating to move forward the AU Gender Agenda.

c. Closing Statement: STC Chairperson

56. H.E Dr. Mèdessè Véronique Tognifodé Mewanou, expressed appreciation to the Ministers who attended the meeting but also the experts who carried out intensive days of negotiation during the Technical meeting. The work done by the AUC to enable this STC to convene and decide on critical matters relating to Gender Equality and Women Empowerment was recognized.
57. The outgoing STC Bureau under the leadership on H.E. Beatrice Lomeya Atilite was congratulated and appreciated for the work done during its tenure and the new Bureau's commitment to continue the work to promote and protect women's right in Africa was reaffirmed.
58. The nomination of Zimbabwe as the Southern African Region for the 3rd Vice-Chairperson of the STC Bureau was acknowledged, while North Africa was urged to finalise consultations and communicate to the Secretariat through the Dean its nominated candidate for the 2nd Vice Chairperson, within 7 days of this meeting.
59. The 5th STC meeting was dully closed.

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