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**ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION**  
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**Assembly/AU/20(XXXIII)**

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**ANNUAL REPORT OF HIS EXCELLENCY ROCH MARC CHRISTIAN  
KABORÉ  
PRESIDENT OF BURKINA FASO  
AND  
AFRICAN UNION LEADER ON ENDING FEMALE GENITAL  
MUTILATION (FGM)**

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

1. You will recall that during the 31st Summit held in February 2019, I had the distinct honour of being designated African Union Leader on Ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
2. As such, I would like to present to this august Assembly a Progress Report on the African Union Initiative on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, known as the "**Saleema Initiative**".
3. I am appreciative of the actions and initiatives undertaken by the AUC, particularly the Department of Social Affairs to promote the Saleema Initiative, enlist the support and assistance of partners, as well as developing a framework for a continental response to eliminate FGM.
4. At the 31st Summit held in February 2019, the High Level side event co-hosted by Burkina Faso and the AUC served as a platform to launch the Initiative.
5. I would like to seize this opportunity to renew once again my sincere thanks to the partners for their support including the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation.
6. The existing legal framework of our Union, notably the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of Women - the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as the Maputo Plan of Action are good references in our fight against these harmful practices which violate the rights of our girls and women.
7. These instruments together with Agenda 2063 have clearly defined our commitment to work to protect girls and women at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation and have contributed in no small measure to reducing the burden of this practice on the health of mothers, the ultimate goal being to ensure that all girls and women live a dignified life and fulfil their potential.

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government,  
Distinguished Guests,**

8. Female Genital Mutilation, whatever its form, is a serious violation of women's rights, and a breach of the right to physical and mental integrity, as well as the right to health.
9. Although the prevalence of female genital mutilation has declined sharply in many countries, much remains to be done.

10. This is why the African Commission, with the support of its key partners, embarked on an inclusive process of developing a framework of continental response aimed at putting a definite end to this harmful practice.

11. This initiative gave rise to extensive consultations with Member States, development partners and Civil Society Organizations, through various forums, including the Regional Conference on Eliminating Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation, organized jointly with the Arab Republic of Egypt in June 2019 during which the "Call for Action to Eliminate Child Marriage and Female Genital mutilation" in Africa was adopted.

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government,  
Distinguished Guests,**

12. As we begin the year 2020 with the theme "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development", allow me to highlight the main actions relating to the implementation of the Saleema Initiative.

- a) Political and Community Level Action: Leaders at all levels are custodians and gate keepers of traditions, norms and practices. If we want to change the status quo, if we want to ensure we protect the dignity of girls and women, if we want to make sure that they are empowered to realise their potential, we need to work more and maintain a constructive dialogue with leaders and resource persons in our communities. And that is why the Saleema Initiative considers this action as a priority and urges all Member States to educate and sensitize communities and their leaders to promote local solutions.
- b) Legislation: Female Genital Mutilation is a human rights violation. It is a form of gender-based violence against girls and women, which further reinforces the disparities between men and women. It has no health benefit and causes complications that often last a lifetime.

A key tool that has shown success is having a **strong legislative framework** that provides justice to the victims of this practice. And to achieve positive results, it is essential to work with communities; in other words ensuring that the process is inclusive and that communities take ownership of it.

The initiative presupposes a strong legislative framework banning the practice of female genital mutilation.

- c) Resources: The implementation of the Saleema Initiative will require resources. In addition to limited external support, the initiative provides for the allocation of domestic and mobilization of private financial resources to support preventive measures, facilitate the provision of care and protection services to girls and women victims of this practice and enforcement of legislation, particularly through a participative community approach.

- d) Partnership: It is very important to combine ongoing efforts on the ground in a coordinated manner. Such an approach helps to avoid duplication, to use resources efficiently and to take advantage of approaches that are working. This is a key emphasis of the Initiative which requires, among other things, the participation and commitment of Civil Society Organizations and community groups.

13. Another important aspect to take into account is that the Initiative places emphasis on reporting and accountability.

14. It urges Member States to report regularly to the African Union Commission charged to monitor progress and facilitate periodic reporting through the Leader.

15. In addition, the Initiative will work through existing AU accountability bodies and platforms, including the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and the African Commission on the Human and People's Rights (ACHPR), to exhort Member States to honour their commitments on eliminating female genital mutilation.

16. The Saleema Initiative should serve to reaffirm our commitment to end all forms of gender-based violence, particularly female genital mutilation. It should also serve as an impetus to report on the progress we are making and to share data and information on how we are doing it.

17. At the November ICPD Summit in Nairobi, Africa reiterated its commitment to empower girls and women and address the pervasive gender-based violence and human rights violations, particularly with regard to harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

18. This renewed commitment is welcome as we celebrate 25 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

19. As we go forward, it is imperative that we intensify our efforts to unleash the potential of girls and women, by paying particular attention to capacity building in the fight against FGM, as well as building strong legislative frameworks that ensure their protection and empowerment.

**Excellencies Heads of State and Government  
Distinguished Guests,**

20. Our quest is one of saving and protecting the lives of 50 million girls under the age of 15 living in Africa who are at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation by the year 2030.

21. It is important that within the framework of the Roadmap of our mandate, appropriate actions are implemented to reap significant results.

22. To this end, I hope I can count on the valuable support of each and every one.

I thank you for your kind attention.

**DRAFT DECISION ON ANNUAL REPORT OF HIS EXCELLENCY ROCH MARC CHRISTIAN KABORÉ, PRESIDENT OF BURKINA FASO AND AFRICAN UNION LEADER ON ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**  
**Doc. Assembly/AU/20(XXXIII)**

The Assembly,

1. **COMMENDS** H.E. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso for the commitment and effort to end female genital mutilation;
2. **RECALLS** African Union Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.383(XVII) on “Support of a Draft Resolution at the Sixty Sixth Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to Ban Female Genital Mutilation in the World” adopted at the 17<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in July 2011;
3. **FURTHER RECALLS** and Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.737(XXXII) on “Galvanising Political Commitment Towards the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa” adopted at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February 2019, which designated H.E. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso as African Union Leader on Ending Female Genital Mutilation;
4. **TAKES NOTE** of the report by the African Union Leader on Ending Female Genital Mutilation to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government;
5. **COMMITTS** to implementing recommendations from the report of the African Union Leader on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, including;
  - a) Political and community level action;
  - b) Strengthening of legislative frameworks that seek to encourage community engagement and ownership;
  - c) Allocation of sufficient domestic resources to drive national and local action to eliminate the harmful practice;
  - d) Strengthening partnership in intervention, information and knowledge sharing; and,
  - e) Member States to “report regularly to the African Union Commission” on action to eliminate harmful practices and to champion accountability on “commitments to eliminate female genital mutilation”.

2020-02-10

# Annual Report of HIS Excellency Roch Marc Christian Kaboré President of Burkina Faso and African Union Leader on Ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

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