



## Concept Note

### 25<sup>th</sup> Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union

20 – 23 January, 2015 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

#### 1. Introduction

The year 2015 will be a notable year for the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) and its initiatives. The African Union (AU) has dedicated 2015 as “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063,” and falls within the African Women’s Decade (2010-2020). The Agenda 2063 embodies Africa’s vision for a continent that is integrated, peaceful, prosperous, people-centered, and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. The Agenda’s strategic aspirations and goals emphasize the importance of a peaceful and secure Africa, relying particularly on the important contributions of the youth and women to the actualization of *THE AFRICA WE WANT*. Agenda 2063 presents an opportunity to further substantiate Africa’s position on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In addition, 2015 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20), the fifteenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and the finalization of deliberations on the Post-2015 agenda. These events together create a unique opportunity for the acceleration and realization of the commitments made to African women’s rights, gender equality, women’s empowerment and inclusive development.

The GIMAC is a leading African women’s civil society network dedicated to the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the respective thematic areas. The year 2015 will present an opportunity for the GIMAC network to reflect on existing gaps, emerging issues and strategies for implementation of existing commitments made by African Union member states to women’s human rights, health, education, governance, women’s economic empowerment, peace and security and climate change.

The 25<sup>th</sup> GIMAC Consultative meeting will be held on 20 - 23 January 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme “**Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063: what is the change we want to see?**” The meeting will be held prior to the 26<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, which will be convened on the 26 and 27 January 2015.

The meeting will build on prior discussions between the GIMAC and the African Union Commission on engendering Agenda 2063. In May 2013, the African Union Commission Consultative Conference of Women Stakeholders on Pan Africanism, Renaissance and Agenda 2063 was held in partnership with the GIMAC. In June 2014, the AU presented a draft of

Agenda 2063 to the GIMAC members and gender ministers. In giving their feedback, the GIMAC members used the opportunity to ensure that gender elements and women's role in various fields were reflected in the document.

During the 25th GIMAC consultative meeting, an update will be given on the Solemn Declaration Index and how the GIMAC members can use it to monitor the implementation of the SDGEA and motivate Member States to use the tool. The African Union Commission and Gender Ministers will also join the GIMAC members in deliberations during the meeting, which will be instrumental in mobilizing support for the recommendations of the GIMAC during the AU Summit and throughout the year.

## **2. Background**

The GIMAC is an African women's campaign with a network of more than 55 civil society organizations promoting gender equality and accountability for women's rights. The GIMAC was launched in 2002 in Durban, South Africa and has since held bi-annual pre-summit consultative meetings in advance of AU Summit meetings to engage AU Member States on African women's rights, issues and concerns. The GIMAC is organized around the themes related to the operating articles of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA- 2004) namely human rights, governance, peace and security, economic empowerment, education and health. The GIMAC also monitors emerging issues such as climate change.

The GIMAC network tracks, advocates for, and monitors the implementation of the SDGEA, which is the AU reporting mechanism for women's rights. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as one of the leading supporters of the GIMAC, and in collaboration with Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and the GIMAC, has developed the Solemn Declaration Index (SDI), as the first ever civil society monitoring tool to assess progress on the implementation of gender equality in Africa.

The GIMAC network members are leading practitioners in women's rights and development and over the years, the network has registered key successes in contributing to the adoption of the AU gender parity principle, the Maputo Protocol and the SDGEA. The GIMAC recommendations have been reflected in the outcome documents of the AU Summit and advocacy campaigns for a female Chairperson for the African Union and the appointment of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security have been successful.

In July 2012, the GIMAC launched the "Empowering Women in Agriculture" (EWA) initiative in partnership with the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) to address the constraints faced by African women in agricultural production.

During the 24<sup>th</sup> GIMAC meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, Gender Ministers and representatives of the Regional Economic Commissions joined the deliberations of the GIMAC and committed to working closely with the GIMAC in successive meetings.

### **3. Objectives**

#### **To advocate for:**

- The adoption of an Agenda 2063 that is fully reflective of African women's rights, issues and concerns.
- Member states to implement African civil society recommendations on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- A transformative Post-2015 development agenda that accelerates the implementation of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Concrete implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 as part of the African Union commitment to 'Silence the Guns' by 2020.
- Development of a roadmap for the execution of the Solemn Declaration Index.

### **4. Expected Outcomes**

The key expected outcomes from the 25th GIMAC consultative meeting include:

- Inclusion of the GIMAC recommendations on women's rights, issues and concerns towards an engendered Agenda 2063 framework are included in the outcome documents of the AU Summit.
- Existence of a strategy to strengthen Africa's position on gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2015 deliberations on Beijing+20, the post-2015 development agenda, including actions for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.
- Consensus on a way forward on the use of the Solemn Declaration Index for monitoring and implementation of SDGEA.
- Strengthened partnerships and networking among the GIMAC members for advocating for member states to implement recommendations from the GIMAC meeting throughout the year.

### **5. Co-organizing partners**

The 2015 GIMAC consultative meeting will be organized through the contribution of each focal point of the thematic areas. Hence the GIMAC members representing the different thematic areas will be key partners in organizing the consultative meeting. The GIMAC focal and thematic members include, but are not limited to Femmes Africa Soolidarité (FAS), Africa Leadership Forum (ALF), African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Ipas Africa Alliance, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), Egyptian Business Women Association (EBWA), Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) and Abantu for Development.

### **6. GIMAC Partners and Stakeholders**

The AU Commission and AU organs are key partners of the GIMAC. Officials of the AU have often engaged in the Pre-Summit Meetings, chiring sessions and actively participating during

the debates. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA) African Centre for Gender is an invaluable partner in lending logistical and technical support to the Pre-Summit Consultative meetings.

Other partners and stakeholders that have supported the GIMAC network over the years include the Government of Norway, the Government of Finland, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Urgent Action Fund-Africa, UN Women, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The Open Society Initiative (OSI), Nobel Women's Initiative, the Agencia Espanola De Cooperacion Internacional, the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

## Annex

### Topics for the 25th GIMAC Pre- Summit

The 25<sup>th</sup> Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting will discuss the SDGEA thematic areas and assess progress based on current challenges that affect implementation and accountability for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women on the continent.

The GIMAC members will dedicate the first two days to reviewing the thematic areas and the progress made over the years since the instruments were adopted. On the third day, there will be a deliberation between the GIMAC participants and the African Union Commission, Gender Ministers and the Gender Focal persons for RECs, UNECA and NEPAD on the implementation of gender equality in all of the 2015 processes.

#### A. Governance

**Article 5: Expand and promote the gender parity principle that we have adopted regarding the Commission of the African Union to all the other organs of the African Union, including its NEPAD programme, to the Regional Economic Communities, and to the national and local levels in collaboration with political parties and the National parliaments in our countries.**

Governance is also about implementing gender equality throughout the AU and in political parties. Governance further means strong institutions, providing financing and political will through these institutions for promoting the gender parity principle and women's empowerment. African women continue to face challenges in holding high-level positions in decision-making processes and in politics as well as accessing opportunities to actively participate in governance. This is due to traditional gender roles, which are perpetuated and manifested in the form of low level of literacy, economic dependency and societal restrictions.

Despite the difficulties, the continent has registered notable successes of women in lead decision-making roles. Africa currently has two female presidents, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia and Catherine Samba-Panza interim president of the Central African Republic. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was elected Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission (AUC) and Madame Bineta Diop was appointed the first AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security.

Sub-Saharan Africa has on average 22% women MPs, which is 8.4% higher than in 2002. Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, and South Africa were ranked among the top 10 parliaments in the world in 2014 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's report on women in parliament. Countries that have shown progress in parliamentary and ministerial positions include South Africa,

Burundi, Uganda and Mozambique. Countries such as South Africa, with a ministerial representation rate of 41%, can be classified as having the highest rates of women's representation (12 women out of the total 29).

The GIMAC members will continue to advocate for gender parity and the empowerment of African women in governance, in national, regional and international institutions as well as through the implementation of continental as well as international instruments such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Maputo Protocol, and the Beijing Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325 and Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The effort centers on increasing women's participation at local, national, regional and continental level. As stated aptly by the AUC Chairperson "We will say there are enough women when we have true gender parity and 50% of women everywhere, unlike now, when we can count them ...We must move towards a situation when we don't have to count them, because they are enough".

## **B. Human Rights**

**Article 3: Launch, within the next year, a campaign for systematic prohibition of the recruitment of child soldiers and abuse of girl children as wives and sex slaves in violation of their Rights as enshrined in the African Charter on Rights of the Child;**

**Article 4: Initiate, launch and engage within two years sustained public campaigns against gender based violence as well as the problem of trafficking in women and girls; Reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behavior of the African society;**

**Article 9: Undertake to Sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by the end of 2004 and to support the launching of public campaigns aimed at ensuring its entry into force by 2005 and usher in an era of domesticating and implementing the Protocol as well as other national, regional and international instruments on gender equality by all States Parties**

The signing and ratification of human rights instruments, the devoted and active role of CSOs in holding governments accountable and the commitment of the GIMAC network members to work on bridging this gap in order to promote and advance women's rights have all contributed to achievements in women's human rights.

In Malabo, last year, the GIMAC network reflected on commitments to the protection and promotion of women's human rights, by urging Member States to take necessary measures to eliminate child marriage, and strongly condemned the kidnapping, by Boko Haram, of over two hundred young girls in northern Nigeria.

Despite the existence of such instruments, the implementation is still very minimal because there is no funding to ensure the full implementation of Protocols' provisions. Legal frameworks that are developed at international, continental and even national levels are not properly promoted at grassroots level. This creates a gap between policy and implementation where the concerned group is not aware and/or has minimum access to such instruments.

## **C. Peace and Security**

**Article 2: Ensure, the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace processes including the prevention,, resolution, management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN Resolution 1325(2000) and also to appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the African Union**

The situation of women in conflict has not changed significantly and women are still absent from the peace table. Although a woman has been appointed as Special Envoy in the AU and there are many frameworks, there is increased sexual violence and inadequate corresponding response to deal with the trauma of sexual violence. Lack of effective demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration has contributed to countries going back to conflict after 5 to 10 years.

In previous GIMAC meetings, members closely examined the issue of violence against women (VAW). The use of sexual and gender based violence is recurrent in many African countries. VAW has been particularly acute in conflict and post-conflict situations where it has been used as a weapon of war. Previous GIMAC sessions facilitated access to women from countries in conflict situation through the support of drafting statement and providing space to deliver their statement.

Current insecurities created by extremism and terrorism violate women and girl's rights to protection, bodily integrity, humanitarian access, education and economic freedom. The impact of violence against women affects their health as well as their overall wellbeing thereby affecting their contribution to their own economic empowerment.

## **D. Education**

**Article 8: Take specific measures to ensure the education of girls and literacy of women, especially in the rural areas, to achieve the goal of "Education for All" (EFA);**

Girls' education in Africa is improving gradually, but completion rates and the quality of education are low. Many girls today who manage to remain and complete primary and even secondary school are not acquiring the basic competencies in literacy and numeracy and this reduces their chances to participate in, and derive full benefits from national prosperity. If the reported trends continue, the region will not achieve universal primary completion until 2052, more than 35 years after the Dakar target and two decades after the likely target date for the post-2015 goals.

Women and girls lack the wherewithal to leverage the modern digital economy and this has enormous implications for their meaningful engagement in the labor market. Compared to men, women and girls are deprived in terms of meaningful access to Information Communication and Technology (ICTs).

Challenges to access education include poverty, conflict, gender biased learning environments and cultural norms. Different countries need to assess their barriers and integrate gender responsive approaches in education. Burkina Faso is an example of a success story where rural satellite schools were developed. This effort has brought education much closer to local communities and reduced gender gaps. Similarly in Ethiopia, a large-scale classroom

construction program in rural areas played a vital role in pushing up school attendance and reducing gender disparities.

The GIMAC members and partners will continue to advocate for the implementation of regional and international laws that facilitate women and girl's opportunities to access and complete primary, secondary and tertiary education that is of quality.

## **E. Health**

**Article 1: Accelerate the implementation of gender specific economic, social, and legal measures aimed at combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and effectively implement both Abuja and Maputo Declarations on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Disease. More specifically we will ensure that treatment and social services are available to women at the local level making it more responsive to the needs of families that are providing care; enact legislation to end discrimination against women living with HIV/AIDS and for the protection and care for people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly women; increase budgetary allocations in these sectors so as to alleviate women's burden of care;**

**Article 10: Establish AIDS Watch Africa as a unit within the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission who should render annual report on HIV/AIDS situation in the continent during annual Summits; and promote the local production of anti-retroviral drugs in our countries.**

Maternal mortality and HIV rates have reduced in some areas but not in regions facing inequalities that result in discrimination against women. Inequalities result in difficulties for women to access information and services on HIV and other easily transmitted diseases. Moreover in many African countries sexual and reproductive health education is not widespread and the culture of discussing openly such issues hasn't developed. In societies where sexual and reproductive health topics are considered taboo, even if women experience rape and violence they wouldn't speak up. Due to fear of being marginalized and also not knowing what exactly happened or what to do next many young girls and women continue to carry the burden of unwanted pregnancy or disease or both. In addition to this in many parts of Africa women and young girls still suffer from female genital mutilation (FGM).

The GIMAC network aims at promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of women by working closely with women that are vulnerable to such problems. Members will also bring this major concern to heads of state and government's attention.

The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa affected post-conflict countries where the health care institutions are yet to develop. The epidemic has unveiled the structural vulnerability of women in these countries. Lack of financing of health care and the burden of care on women exacerbates the situation of women in the region.

The 25<sup>th</sup> GIMAC will have the major task of discussing the recent Ebola outbreak from a health and security perspective. Hence it will give members and other stakeholders an opportunity to identify strategies of response and resource and support mobilization. The debate will also identify approaches to minimize women's vulnerability and increasing their agency in the fight against Ebola and other diseases.



## **F. Economic Empowerment**

**Article 6: Ensure the active promotion and protection of all human rights for women and girls including the right to development by raising awareness or by legislation where necessary**

**Article 7: Actively promote the implementation of legislation to guarantee women's land, property and inheritance rights including their rights to housing**

**Article 11: Accept to establish an African Trust Fund for Women for the purpose of building the capacity of African women and further request the African Union Commission to work out the modalities for the operationalization of the Fund with special focus on women in both urban and rural areas**

Africa has the youngest population in the world, 200 million people aged between 15 and 24. It is expected that the number of young people in Africa will double by 2045.

According to the World Bank between 2000 and 2008, Africa's working age population (15-64 years) grew 2.7% per year. If this trend continues, the continent's labor force will be 1 billion strong by 2040, making it the largest in the world, surpassing both China and India (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010).

This development however poses challenges as well as opportunity. It offers an immense advantage for the continent if this human capital is properly channeled towards the productive sectors of the economy. However if employment opportunities are not sufficient to meet the demands of this labor force it might prove to be a threat to social and political stability.

One of the GIMAC's contributions in responding to this challenge is the development of an initiative to empower women economically. Many African economies are agrarian and the majority of farmers employed in this sector are women. It is against this background that the GIMAC launched "Empowering Women in Agriculture" (EWA) in partnership with the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) to address the constraints faced by African women in agricultural production. GIMAC recognizes the challenges faced by women in terms of access to land, credit and modern technologies. Members will play a key role in putting forward concrete recommendations to address the challenges.