

**ORAL STATEMENT BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON
WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

**TO THE OPEN SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY
COUNCIL ON “SOURCES OF INSTABILITY IN AFRICA: ROOT CAUSES
AND RESPONSES”**

16 December 2014

Mr. President, Members of the Council, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, civil society organizations (CSOs) from different parts of Africa gathered on the 14 to 15 December 2014 in Addis Ababa for a consultative meeting on women, peace and security under the auspices of the Office of the Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC);

Appreciate the opportunity to address the African Union Peace and Security Council on women, peace and security in Africa;

We commend the AUC Chairperson for appointing the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to spearhead and foster accelerated implementation of the women, peace and security agenda;

We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts and commitments of the Special Envoy for actively engaging civil society from the beginning and for amplifying the voices of women in difficult situations;

We further commend the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) and Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) for sustaining engagement on women, peace and security with the AU PSC;

We recognize the continued commitment of the AU to mainstream gender into all the work of the PSC, to ‘Silence the Guns’ by 2020, and the designation of 2015 as the “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063;”

In this context, we call for the full implementation of all existing continental and regional instruments on gender equality and women’s empowerment; in particular for women experiencing the impact of armed conflicts, terrorism and the recent Ebola outbreak.

- We urge the PSC to support the formulation of a continental framework on women, peace and security to complement provisions of the protocol of the Peace and Security Council, and that builds on and enhances implementation of existing national and regional action plans on women, peace and security.
- We call on the PSC to strengthen the Office of the Special Envoy with the requisite resources to fully implement her mandate. In this regard, we also call for the Office of the Special Envoy to become a permanent structure of the AUC, and

for the Open Session of the Council on the status of women, peace and security in Africa to become an annual activity.

- We call on the PSC to urge Governments to increase support to CSOs, particularly women's groups working on WPS, including through comprehensive capacity building initiatives to maximize women's participation in all peace and security processes.

As we hear from women from Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Great Lakes region who will highlight their specific concerns, we are committed as civil society to follow-up and support this process.

In **Nigeria**, the Boko Haram insurgency has disproportionately affected women and girls. The continued abduction of girls is undermining girls' education. Women bear the brunt of displacement, sexual violence, food insecurity, forced marriages, torture, sex trafficking and trauma. The alleged forced use of women and girls as suicide bombers is particularly alarming. In addition, the upcoming 2015 elections also present a worrying potential for violence against women and girls. We therefore call on the Nigerian Government to take the responsibility to protect lives and property.

- We call on the Peace and Security Council to support the Government of Nigeria to ensure the safe return of missing girls and women, guarantee adequate rehabilitation, including legal and psychosocial services for them and their families, and to take protective measures to secure places of learning.
- We call on the Nigerian Government and international community to urgently institute measures to address the needs of the growing population displaced by terrorism and insurgencies, particularly women and children.
- We call on the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to support coordinated responses that are gender-sensitive to counter terrorism and insurgencies, including through collaboration with relevant security and border management agencies.

In **Somalia**, the liberation of a number of regions from Al-Shabaab has improved security in these areas including in the capital, Mogadishu. Despite this, poverty and insecurity continues to affect the Somali people. Women constitute the poorest of the poor and are under-represented in the new state institutions. They remain susceptible to gender-based violence perpetuated by Al Shabaab, with respect to forced marriages and stoning of women and girls to death, on grounds of adultery. They restrict women's freedom of movement and involvement in income-generating activities.

- We call on the Peace and Security Council to urge Somali authorities to counter widespread impunity with regard to gender-based violence during conflict and in peacetime.
- The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) should ensure that women are included in all stages of state building and reconstruction efforts, peace building and constitutional review to ensure their effective contribution to building an

inclusive, stable and developed Somalia.

In **South Sudan**, we are saddened by the deteriorating security situation and its impact on the bodies and livelihoods of women. We are also concerned that women's issues and priorities have not been adequately addressed in the ongoing peace process.

- Therefore, we strongly call on the Peace and Security Council to recommit to the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan. The Council should continuously pressure both the Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in opposition (SPLM/A IO) to genuinely commit to a comprehensive and an inclusive resolution to the conflict in South Sudan through dialogue. We would like to remind the parties to the conflict that the situation cannot be resolved solely through military means.
- The Council should support the call from South Sudanese women for the appointment of a High Level Gender Advisor to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led South Sudan peace process. The main responsibility of the Gender Advisor is to provide technical guidance to the Special Envoys and the Chief Negotiators on gender with special attention to women's issues and priorities. This will ensure that these priorities are integrated into subsequent agreements.

In the **Great Lakes Region**, we are deeply concerned about the persistent insecurity due to the presence of many armed factions in the region, which continues to limit the freedom of movement of women and impact heavily on their economic activities thereby rendering them impoverished.

We are committed to implementing specific instruments on women, peace and security for the women of the region such as the Kampala Declaration of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on sexual and gender based violence. We are also committed to promoting the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Resolution 1325, which will help to strengthen advocacy, experience sharing and networking, especially between women of the three countries of the region, namely Burundi, DRC and Rwanda.

- We call on the African Union and its organs to closely monitor the Burundi electoral process in 2015 and support the contributions of women peace activists in preventing electoral violence, which is a barrier to women's political participation.
- We call on Governments of the region to accelerate the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in the region taking into account the special needs of women and girls.

Mr. President, Members of the Council, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, we thank you for your attention.