



GIMAC STATEMENT

“Evaluate, Contribute, Implement”

25th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Mainstreaming Gender in the African Union and Member States

20-23 January 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

We, women from civil society women’s groups, have met for the 25th GIMAC under the theme: “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063: What is the Change We Want to See?” and have deliberated during the civil society consultation meeting on different thematic issues including women’s human rights, health, education, governance, women’s economic empowerment, peace and security and climate change,

Welcoming the invitation of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission extended to African women at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the African Union to contribute to the development of Agenda 2063 and the follow-up consultations jointly conducted by the AU and the GIMAC, including in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea,

Appreciating the opportunity to contribute to the strategy of Agenda 2063 towards its adoption and implementation,

We thank you for providing support and space to civil society organizations. We are delighted and committed to be part of this process and to support the realization of the vision of the Africa we want in 50 years,

We deeply applaud the designation of the year 2015 as the Year of Women’s Empowerment and the dedication of AU deliberations on this theme. We propose therefore that the year for women’s empowerment be seized as an opportunity with a focus on the implementation of practical solutions that will provide measurable results for women’s empowerment.

The African Union has made great progress in recognizing the importance of women’s contributions to development and has put in place the necessary legal frameworks for women’s empowerment. These frameworks and principles, in our opinion, are not open to renegotiation but should lead practice, monitoring and implementation. We want to focus on how these rights should be actualized. These include the Maputo Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In order to ensure the integrity of data and compliance with reporting requirements, we have worked with the United Nations Economic Commission (ECA) for Africa in developing a monitoring tool, the Solemn Declaration Index (SDI). It has been systematically refined and is now ready to be used on a wider scale to monitor progress on gender equality in the AU member states. This will inform Monitoring, Evaluation and Advocacy for the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality.

Our first overarching recommendation is that Africa is in dire need of a mindset change. Our perspective on culture and its role in our self-definition is critical. Culture is too often perceived as a constraint to women's empowerment when in fact it should be considered as a driving force in the recreation of societies.

In the second instance, Africa must imperatively begin to learn to use its own resources for the continent's development. Homegrown solutions should be developed in order to respond to the realities of our communities.

And finally, Africa must reject the poverty mentality, which has been largely infused into the people's minds in all spheres and at all levels of the society. Africa is, by no means, a poor continent. It is one of the wealthiest continents in the world. For this to happen, we, African people, need to embrace big ideas, be audacious and strengthen our self-confidence, and the self-confidence of women in particular if women are to drive change.

We therefore propose practical solutions for the first ten years in the following sectors. Many of these proposals are already good practices in AU member states. They can be replicated or scaled up to promote women's empowerment.

Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment and women's human rights go hand in hand. We need Inclusiveness of growth to ensure that no one is left behind and that job creation is targeted at women --- and the youth who are our present and the future.

We need investment in science, information and communications technology, and innovative agriculture and financial systems for women for example MPesa and biometric credit cards, which will contribute to women's financial autonomy.

We are once again putting forth the request for a bank for women that will address the specific challenges that women face in navigating the financial system.

We are asking for more women in corporate decision-making and that percentages of government tenders go to women. The process of registering and doing business needs to be simplified and demystified.

Training for women on business compliance and trade is also a priority.

There should be strong partnership between women in the private sector and those in the public sector. GIMAC, AfDB and the AU should set up a task force to come up with an action plan, targets and a road map to accelerate women's economic empowerment.

Agriculture

Following last year's GIMAC specific recommendations on agriculture, we continue to request that women, the primary actors and contributors to agriculture, be present all over the value chain, and at all levels.

They should be given

- Full access and control to land,
- Full access to markets.

We want women to be given access to the most recent technology to enhance their productivity, expand their business. They need to be trained to use modern equipment and benefit from latest innovations.

The next priorities include: Encouraging women to work in associations, to scale up cooperatives and bring in the youth, and promoting linkages with the private sector, including for the production of equipment.

Peace and security

This is one of the most important sectors for required action. The Special Envoy on WPS of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission is preparing a framework with indicators to monitor the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

We propose that each country be required to prepare a National Action Plan to accelerate implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including in particular a focus on violence against women, rehabilitation and recovery programmes, child soldiers, preventative measures such as the Women's Situation Room in the context of elections, strengthen the judicial system to accelerate access to justice and end impunity, protection of refugees and displaced people. Human security is more sustainable than military security. We propose urgent attention to the disparities and inequalities and corruption and poor governance that are at the basis of unrest and instability in our countries

Education

The focus needs to be on quality education at two levels: the content and the infrastructure. On the content, curricula need to ensure that girls' rights are protected and that the history programmes reflect the tremendous contributions of African women pioneers and innovators and their role in building Africa. A special focus should be given to civic education and literacy.

Regarding infrastructure, the focus should be in building schools that will promote the retention of the girl child. Ending child marriage should become a priority.

We also want to see the creation of centers of excellence on science and technology throughout the continent and we need to encourage and support mentorship programmes.

Health

Drawing lessons from the Ebola crisis, we ask for the redirection of funds towards health infrastructure and access to health care from all part of the continent, and in particular from remote areas. We want that a special focus be given to public health policies, infrastructure, education, sanitation aiming at the protection populations.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights must be aligned with the Maputo protocol.

In HIV aids, women and young people are the most vulnerable. We need to bring extra support to identify innovative technologies that protect women and girls from HIV Aids.

Conclusion

We have decided that the Solemn Declaration Index should be linked to the agenda 2063 to help measure progress made towards its implementation. To this effect, we have decided that we will produce an alternative report of the civil society and that all our studies and research on good practice and solutions will be put on the ECA knowledge-sharing platform.

Finally, we welcome the opportunity to hold this consultative meeting with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the AU ministers, the Regional Economic Communities gender focal points, UN Women and UNDP. We would like to see that our position is strengthened at the national level to ensure that at international meetings such as meeting to review Beijing+20 or the post-2015 agenda, we have a coordinated and united position, allowing us to go into global negotiations on these agendas with confidence.

Done in Addis Ababa, on the 21st January 2015.