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**CONTINUATION OF THE FIRST AFRICAN UNION SPECIALISED TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

18 January 2016, Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

**STC/WGDD/Min/Rpt.
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REPORT OF THE MINISTERIAL SESSION

**18 JANUARY 2016
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to the Decision of Assembly/AU/Dec.365(XVII) adopted at the 17th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in July 2011, and the Decision EX. CL/Dec.701(XXI) adopted by the 21st Ordinary Session of Executive Council of the Africa Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2012, the African Union Commission convened the First Ministerial Session of the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women Empowerment.

2. The STC on Gender and Women Empowerment comprises Ministers responsible for Gender and Women Affairs or such other Ministers or authorities duly accredited by the Governments of Member States.

II. ATTENDANCE

3. The following Member States were in attendance: Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, , Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea – Conakry, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, The Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were also in attendance in Khartoum: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

5. The following African and International Organizations and Agencies participated in the meeting in Khartoum: UNWOMEN and the Embassy of Kazakhstan based in Ethiopia.

III. OPENING SESSION

6. The following statements were made in Khartoum:

Master of Ceremony: H.E. Mashair Aldawalab, Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Republic of Sudan

7. The Minister welcomed all present to the 1st Specialised Technical Committee on Gender and Women Empowerment and to the Republic of The Sudan. He highlighted that the role of the STC is to contribute to the work of the African Union in realising the aspirations of the African women for gender equality and women's empowerment through implementing the policies that have been adopted.

8. The Minister recalled the 50th anniversary of the African Union, the struggle for independence by Africa's forefathers and the declaration by African Heads of State of 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and indicated that Africa will surely achieve the full objectives of its development agenda.

9. The Minister reiterated Sudan's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and announced that the country is resolute in promoting the rights of women. This is demonstrated by among others, President Al Bashir's participation in various AU summits and the representation of women in various sectors, as well as the guarantee of women's rights in the Constitution of the country and national legislation.

10. The Minister reminded Member States that while this gathering will discuss gender equality and how to safeguard the rights of women, full equality is yet to be achieved. Member States have to implement the rights of women guaranteed by their constitution and national laws. The meeting is holding here today to renew African solidarity as one of Sudan's objectives is to promote solidarity amongst all African states and for the implementation of all AU policies. The meeting will discuss how to achieve the development goals of 2063, the implementation of 2015 Declaration.

Statement the Chairperson of AU Bureau of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affair

11. Honourable Deputy Minister AES Damasane, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development of Zimbabwe delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Bureau of Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs.

12. In her remarks, the Deputy Minister welcomed all participants to Sudan and specifically to this inaugural meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee on Gender and Women's Empowerment. She underscored the responsibility of the Ministers gathered here today in shaping and setting the tone for all future STCs on Gender and Women Affairs.

13. The Deputy Minister highlighted that the task of this meeting is to ensure that the Africa we want as guided by the African Union Agenda 2063, and in particular Aspiration 6 is realised. Therefore, the plans that will be made in this meeting will have an impact on many generations to come. In that regard, she emphasised that the onus is on this meeting to ensure that the work on gender and women's empowerment yields tangible results for women on the Continent.

14. In closing, she underscored that the outcomes of this meeting will have a bearing on the successful implementation of Agenda 2063.

Statement by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, AUC Chairperson

15. Ms. Ben Ali, the AG. Director of the AUC Women, Gender and Development delivered a statement on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

16. On behalf of the AUC Chairperson, Ms Ben Ali expressed deepest gratitude to the President of the Republic of Sudan, His Excellency Mr. Oumar Al Bashir, the Government of the Sudan and especially the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and all the people of the Sudan for accepting to host the 1st AU STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment.

17. She thanked the Government for all efforts put in place in preparing for this STC to ensure that it is a success. She also thanked the Republic of Sudan for the hospitality extended to all the delegations since arrival in Khartoum.

18. This meeting is a milestone for gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa as it is a key opportunity to reflect on what has worked and what still needs to be done in the continent to achieve gender equality. The audience was informed that the implementation of all adopted AU policies on gender equality and women's empowerment should not only be limited to the AU Commission, but should involve all RECs and Member State to accelerate greater results on women's socio-economic and political rights.

19. She stressed the need for Member States to enhance women's rights in various sectors and also to sensitize women about their rights so that they can claim their rights. She recalled the great role played by the private sector, development partners and Civil Society Organizations to support gender equality and women's empowerment at national and regional levels.

20. She highlighted that women's empowerment is key to the achievement of Agenda 2063 and underscored that the AU Heads of State and Government have adopted 2016 as the year of human rights focusing on women's rights following the theme for 2015. She stressed that these all commitments should be fully implemented for women to enjoy their equal rights.

21. In conclusion, she called all Member States and other stakeholders to work together to make the African Women's Decade a success and especially for grassroots women in the continent.

Statement by H.E. Dr Jalal Yousuf Al Digair, Representative of the President of the Republic of the Sudan

22. On behalf of the President of The Sudan, H.E. President Oumar Al Bashir, the representative welcomed the delegates from Member States, the African Union Commission on behalf of the President and the people of Sudan

23. He expressed his appreciation and that of his Government for the opportunity to host the first STC on Gender and Women Empowerment in Sudan. He recognised the efforts of the AUC with regards to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the continent.

24. He noted that this meeting is taking place when Africa is facing numerous challenge, including conflicts, climate change and other development challenges.

25. Recalling the African Heads of State's decision to dedicate 2015 as the year of women, and the African Women Decades, he reiterated Sudan's commitment and support to all continental instruments and decisions relative to gender equality and women's empowerment and the country's decision to host this meeting as a demonstration of such commitment.

26. Referring to Marie and Aisha's roles in the Koran and the importance of religion, he described as a fallacy, the idea that Islam is an impediment to the promotion of women's rights. He highlighted women's leadership in Sudanese and African Culture and drew attention to the rights that women have in Sudan. He also stated that society in general respects tradition and culture and is apprehensive to laws.

27. He also shared information about the Sudanese National Dialogue and programs to enhance the promotion and protection of women's rights. He concluded by reiterating his appreciation and stated that it is a distinct honour for his country to host this meeting

28. The following statements were made during the Continuation of the Ministerial Session of the STC on 18 January 2016, in Addis Ababa,:

29. The opening Ceremony of the continuation of the 1st STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment was chaired by H.E. Mashair AL DAMALAB, Minister of Welfare and Social Security of the Republic of The Sudan and facilitated by Mrs. Mahawa Kaba-Wheeler, Director of Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union Commission (AUC).

30. The Director welcomed the Ministers and delegates to the meeting while recalling the unfinished business of the STC in Khartoum. She specially welcomed the presence of H.E. Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner for Trade and Industry who represented H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

31. In her welcome Statement, H.E. Madam Zenebu Tadesse, the Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia welcomed participants to Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian Minister observed that Africa is showing an ever increasing commitment for ensuring the rights, equality and empowerment of women, who for a very long time have been toiling in various socio-economic and political challenges that deterred their progress and threatened their wellbeing.

32. She underscored that African governments now recognise that there cannot be any meaningful and sustainable progress in economic, social and political fields without the effective and equal participation of women in all national endeavors. It was on that basis that the African Union declared 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Africa's Agenda 2063 and 2016 as "the African Year of Human Rights with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women".

33. In her Opening Statement, H.E Fatima Haram Acyl, Commissioner for Trade and Industry who represented H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, welcomed all delegates to the continuation meeting of the 1st Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women Empowerment. She expressed her profound gratitude to the Republic of The Sudan, and in particular the Minister of Welfare and Social Security, of the Republic of The Sudan, H.E. Mashair ALDAMALAB, for hosting the first meeting of the STC in Khartoum in November 2015 and for the unmatched hospitality extended to the delegates throughout their stay in Khartoum.

34. Recalling the June 2014 Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which requested the African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the bureaus of various sectoral ministerial conferences, to pursue and finalise the process of operationalising the remaining STCs by December 2014, the meeting was encouraged to complete the outstanding business from the Sudan meeting to ensure that the STC on Gender and Women's Empowerment was operationalised. It was highlighted that the operationalisation of this STC on Gender and Women Empowerment will contribute greatly in ensuring that gender and women's affairs remain on the priority list of the agenda of the African Union.

35. In conclusion, she requested all delegates to concretise into action all commitments made in connection with gender equality and women's empowerment to better the lives of African women.

36. In her Welcome Remarks, H.E Mashair ALDAMALAB, Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Republic of the Sudan welcomed all delegate and expressed gratitude to the African Union Commission and AU Member States for attending the meeting.

37. The Minister highlighted that African women have a great role to play in society. She mentioned that Africa should intensify its efforts in its commitment for gender equality and women's empowerment in the year 2016 and beyond. She added that 2016 being the African Year of Human Rights with special emphasis on Women's Rights, will provide a good opportunity for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

38. She highlighted that this meeting is important as it will elect the Bureau of the STC, adopt the Rules of Procedure and adopt the Report of the Experts Meeting.

39. In conclusion, the Minister welcomed the delegates once again and wished them fruitful deliberations.

I. THE ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME

40. The Draft Agenda and Work Programme were presented and adopted (the Agenda and the Work Programme are attached).

V. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

41. The following members of the Bureau were elected:

- a) Chairperson: Malawi (Southern Africa)
- b) 1st Vice - Chairperson: Democratic Republic of the Congo (Central Africa)
- c) 2nd Vice - Chairperson: Togo (West Africa)
- d) 3rd Vice - Chairperson: Mauritania (North Africa)
- e) Rapporteur: The Sudan (East Africa)

VI. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXPERTS MEETING

42. The Ministers considered and adopted the Report of the Experts Meeting with inputs, recommendations, amendments and questions on the following points:

Election of the STC Bureau

43. Following advice from the Legal Counsel on the election and voting procedures as well as the emphasis that election of the Bureau was important to operationalise the STC, some Member States requested further clarity on the election and voting procedures, particularly Rule 16.

Adoption of the Rules of procedure

44. Following advice from the Legal Counsel that the Rules of Procedure for all AU STCs are standardised and only Rule 5 is unique to each STC, it was proposed that should Member States have any further inputs or proposed amendments to the draft Rules of Procedure, those should be forwarded to the Secretariat to be incorporated into the final version. The Rules were adopted subject to incorporation of any inputs or proposed amendments received from Member States.

Adoption of Experts Report

45. The Experts report was adopted subject to incorporation of any comments from Member States.

VII. ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERIAL REPORT OF THE FIRST SPECIALISED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON GENDER AND WOMEN AFFAIRS

46. The Ministers authorised the Bureau of the STC to adopt the report and to submit the report for consideration to the Permanent Representatives Council (PRC) during the June/July AU Summit

VIII. CLOSING CEREMONY

The Chairperson of the STC Bureau thanked everyone for their patience and adjourned the meeting.