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**FIRST AFRICAN UNION  
SPECIALISED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE  
ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT  
18 JANUARY 2016, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**STC 1/WGDD/Experts/Rpt.  
Original: English**

**REPORT OF THE EXPERT MEETING  
18 JANUARY 2016  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

## INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting of the AU Experts of the First Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women Empowerment was held at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 18 January 2016, continuing from the meeting held in Khartoum, Sudan from 25 to 27 November 2015 due to lack of quorum.

### ATTENDANCE:

2. The following Member States attended the meeting: 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.

3. The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) was also in attendance in Khartoum: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

4. The following African and International Organisations and Agencies participated in the meeting in Khartoum: UN WOMEN and the Embassy of Kazakhstan based in Ethiopia.

5. The list of participants is attached as **Annex I**.

## I. OPENING CEREMONY

6. At the opening ceremony in Khartoum, the following remarks and speeches were made:

### **Statement by the Representative of Chairperson of the AU Bureau of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs**

7. 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.

8. 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 Experts gathered in shaping and setting the tone for all future STCs on Gender and Women Empowerment.

9. The Deputy Minister concluded by highlighting 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 empowerment yields tangible results for women on the continent.

**Statement by H.E. Mashair AL DAMALAB, Minister of Welfare and Social Security, Republic of the Sudan**

10. The Minister welcomed all present and expressed gratitude to the African Union Commission (AUC) and AU Member States for attending the meeting. She specifically thanked the AUC Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma for choosing Sudan to host this inaugural meeting of the STC on Gender and Women Empowerment.

11. The Minister highlighted the importance of this gathering which implements the AU decision to transform sectorial Ministerial Conferences into Specialised Technical Committees.

12. Sudan relies heavily on this meeting to ensure that important decisions are taken to support and promote the achievement of gender equality and women empowerment at various levels in Sudan and in all other Member States of the AU.

13. The Minister underscored that Sudan is pleased to host this meeting and that it hopes that it will be a success and a good example to follow for all subsequent Gender STCs.

14. In conclusion, the Minister reassured the meeting that Sudan has prioritised cooperation with other African countries, especially on issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: BY MS. LEILA BEN ALI AG. DIRECTOR, AUC WOMEN, GENDER & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

15. On behalf of H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Acting Director of WGDD welcomed all the delegations present at this STC in Khartoum and expressed appreciation to the Republic of Sudan for the hospitality provided to all the delegations. She also congratulated the Republic of Sudan for having accepted to host the 1st Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Empowerment.

16. She recalled that the organisation of this inaugural STC on Gender and Women Empowerment during 2015, is in essence a continuation of the implementation of various AU policies and instruments and also because 2015 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Midterm Review of the African Women's Decade and the Declaration of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

17. She further recalled the AU Heads of State Declaration of 2015 as the “Year of Women Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”. She underscored that Agenda 2063 cannot be realised without the full and effective participation of women in governance, peace and security as well as socio-economic development.

18. In conclusion, she emphasised the AU’s commitment to support Member States to implement the AU policies and instruments that they have adopted at national and regional levels and wished all the Experts fruitful deliberations.

19. In the continuation meeting held in Addis Ababa in January 2016, WGDD Director, on behalf of the AUC Chairperson, welcomed all present and emphasised the importance of operationalizing the STC on Gender and Women Empowerment.

## **II. ELECTION OF BUREAU OF EXPERTS**

20. The election of the Bureau of Experts was deferred to the Ministers which will cascade from Ministers level to Experts level.

## **III. PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

21. As this is an inter-governmental meeting and an organ of the AU, a simple majority is required to adopt the agenda in line with the AU rules of procedure. In that regard, the agenda was adopted

## **SESSION II:**

## **IV. PRESENTATION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF STC ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

22. The Representative of the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC) of the AU, facilitated discussions on the draft Rules of Procedure of the STC on Gender and Women Empowerment.

23. The Representative of OLC provided a background of the AU Specialised Technical Committees and highlighted that STCs are not just committees, but organs of the AU listed in article 5 of the AU Constitutive Act with other organs of the AU.

24. He highlighted that this meeting constitutes a very critical stage in informing gender policies for the continent. It is a three stage process which starts with Experts making recommendations to the Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs on issues on the agenda of the STC, who will review and make recommendations to the Executive Council, which in turn will make proposals for adoption to the AU Heads of State and Government.

25. The Representative of OLC underlined that these Rules of Procedure are not the first, as the AU has already established fourteen (14) STCs, many of which have already adopted their Rules of Procedure. Although the Rules of Procedure are standard, they also take into account sector-specific peculiarities.

26. In conclusion, he added that the role of the Office of the Legal Counsel of the AUC is to advise on legal matters to ensure that decisions taken at this STC are consistent with the rules of the AU.

### **SESSION III**

#### **V. DISCUSSIONS OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF STC ON GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

27. The meeting agreed to propose the following to the Ministers during their meeting on 28 - 29 November 2015:

- To recommend for the title of the STC to be reviewed to include “equality” to be consistent with the AU vision and policies to attain gender equality and women empowerment in the continent. In that regard, the title shall be “STC on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment”.
- Rule 2: the Arabic version states “Legal Status” and not “Status”. The OLC confirmed that the AU- approved document does not contain the word “legal”, but only “status”. The meeting will recommend to the Ministers for the harmonisation of all AU languages in the Rules of Procedure and all documents presented to ensure consistency.
- Rule 5: Powers and Functions to be revised as follows:
- Pursuant to Article 15 of the Constitutive Act of the Union, the STC on Gender and Women Empowerment shall, inter-alia:
  - a. Prepare projects and programmes of the Union and submit to the Executive Council;
  - b. Ensure the supervision, follow-up and the evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union;
  - c. Ensure the coordination and harmonisation of projects and programmes of the Union;
  - d. Submit to the Executive Council either on its own initiative or at the request of the Executive Council, reports and recommendations on the implementation of the provision of this Act;
  - e. Promote common positions and consensus on gender equality, women’s rights and women empowerment in Africa;
  - f. Advocate for the universal ratification, domestication and implementation of existing AU policies and instruments on gender equality, women empowerment and women’s rights;

- g. Advocate for the promotion and protection of all human rights of women as well as for the implementation of the States obligations and commitments under international human rights law in relation to the human rights of women, which were made at international, continental, regional, and Member States level;
- h. Advocate for the promotion of gender- responsive practices as well as the realization of commitments to the human rights of women made at international, continental regional and Member States levels;
- i. Encourage Member States to report per the agreed official reporting schedules on the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the African Women's Decade;
- j. Work to mainstream gender equality and women empowerment in all policies and programmes of the AU organs and institutions, Member States and Regional Economic Communities to close the gender-gap by 2020, in accordance with the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) and to achieve women empowerment in Africa;
- k. Ensure harmonisation of instruments and policies for gender equality and women empowerment;
- l. Mobilise resources for the Fund for African Women;
- m. Advocate for the inclusion of women experts in all AU high level panel discussions;
- n. Advocate for the inclusion of women in all AU high level reporting;
- o. Advocate for Member States to propose women's candidacy for international civil service positions;
- p. Advocate for Member States to propose women's candidacy in their submission for AU chairperson and deputy chairperson per the rules of procedure of elections;
- q. Carry out any other functions assigned to it by the Executive Council or the Assembly.

28. The STC on Gender and Women Empowerment may set up such Sub-committees or ad hoc working groups, as it deems necessary and shall determine their mandate, composition and functioning.

29. The Member States expressed the need to ensure gender equality in the election of Bureau members and to promote women empowerment in the general workings of the STC.,

30. The Legal Counsel advised the meeting of the need to include a rule on the restriction of STCs deciding on matters that have financial and structural implications on the Union, in accordance with AU Assembly Decision 582 and also considering this addition has been made on the Rules of Procedure on the eight STCs that have become operational. The proposal was not accepted by some Member States. As a result, there was no consensus on the matter.

## **VI. CONSIDERATION OF THE MID-TERM REPORT OF AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE 2010-2014**

31. WGDD presented the preliminary findings of the first Mid-Term Report of the African Women's Decade (AWD).

32. The AWD is implemented in two phases: the first phase covers the first five years to 2015 and the second phase between 2016 and 2020. This Mid-term Review report is concerned only with the first phase.

33. This Mid-term Report is based on 16 countries that responded to the questionnaire sent by the AUC on the AWD. The report from Mauritania which was received after the closing date was acknowledged. The reports were received from the four regions of Africa except the Central African region. Member States were encouraged to submit their responses to the questionnaire to ensure that the Mid-Term review report is representative of the correct state of implementation in AU Member States.

34. The draft report was presented by Ms. Fatmata Sessay following which Member States raised concerns and made several recommendations. These include, among others:

- a. Some country reports such as Ethiopia and Eritrea are not included in the list of countries that have responded to the AUC questionnaire, even though reports were submitted.
- b. The report should include a section on best practices as some reports of Member States have highlighted best practices as a learning mechanism.
- c. The initial synthetic report that was presented did not reflect the country reports that were submitted. Specific attention was drawn to paragraphs 43, 44, 45 and 79 of the report which provides inaccurate information about some countries of the North African region. Member States noted that some of the statements in the report amount to political evaluation of some countries and therefore will not be accepted and should be deleted from the report, which has since been effected in the revised report.
- d. Member States observed that the majority of the report constitutes information obtained from a supplementary report of a Civil Society Organisation while the remainder of the report has been diluted, or given different interpretation from what was submitted. Member States underlined that structurally, a Member State cannot adopt a report drafted by a Civil Society Organisation. It was

recommended for the report to be revised in accordance with the country reports submitted and must be reflective of the true state of affairs of Member States.

- e. Member States also noted with concern that although some countries did not submit reports, some sections of the report provide an evaluation of those countries, which reflects inaccurate information about the countries.
- f. Member States observed that during the consolidation and summation of the report, a lot of information got lost in translation, assumptions, perceptions and interpretations. It was suggested that a mechanism should be developed for reports to be sent to Member States for validation before discussed in a public forum such as this.
- g. Some Member States noted that the AU questionnaire was received only a few days before travelling to Khartoum and therefore could not provide responses. The Member State further underscored the financial constraints that make it impossible to convene stakeholder consultation meetings at a short notice. Therefore more time is required to be able to consult and develop a report.
- h. Member States recommended that financial challenges should be reflected in the report and must be prioritised at the level of the AU Heads of State.
- i. Member States further recommended that:
  - i. The question on financial allocation should be rephrased to the percentage of the national budget allocated to gender as opposed to whether or not what was allocated was sufficient.
  - ii. The report must focus on the value-additions of the AWD.
  - iii. The AU must cluster all instruments that have been ratified and develop a mechanism to harmonise reporting commitments by Member States.
  - iv. Member States that have not reported are to be given opportunities to submit reports within 10 days as the current report is not reflective of the true state of implementation of the AWD.
  - v. Member States must be trained on gender-budgeting as the lack of reporting on the issue indicates lack of skills in that area.
  - vi. The methodology should be clarified to indicate whether or not CSOs will also respond to the same questionnaire.

35. WGDD provided clarity to the fact that the questionnaires were sent to AU Member States Embassies in Addis Ababa, with a two (2) months reporting deadline. It was emphasised that reminders were sent several times and countless requests were made for Member States to report within the set timeframes.

36. The Consultant noted all the concerns raised and committed to comprehensively reviewing the report in accordance with the feedback received from



the meeting. She clarified that pages 11 to 20 of the report are not inputs from the questionnaire, but a supplementary report of a Civil Society Organisation called "Make Every Woman Count". This is in line with the provisions of the AWD which requires a perspective of Civil Society on the implementation of the Decade.

37. The AU Commission urged Member States that have not reported to do so to ensure that the Mid-term Report also reflects their views. A disclaimer in the civil society section will be included indicating that that section of the report is a supplementary report. The report will also include a section on criteria for selection of best practices.

## **VII. BRIEFING ON THE AU IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2015 THEME**

38. WGDD provided an overview of activities that the AU conducted during the 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment Towards Africa's Agenda 2063

39. Member States were briefed about the background to the adoption of the AU theme for 2015. The presentation recalled the AU Gender Architecture and global policies on gender equality and women's empowerment and how their implementation could contribute to the successful implementation of the theme for 2015.

40. The key implementation areas and achievements by the AU Commission were highlighted. These include, among others, the organisation and coordination strategy used to undertake various activities by different AUC departments, as well as the leadership of the AUC Chairperson in championing the successful implementation of the theme.

41. The strategies for implementing the theme in 2015 and beyond, were underlined and Experts were informed about a draft Plan of Action focusing on six (6) key priority areas adopted by the AU Assembly in their Declaration in June 2015 in Sandton in South Africa.

42. Member States were encouraged to share their experiences, achievements and challenges regarding the implementation of the theme for 2015. These will be incorporated into the draft Plan of Action to get an inclusive document.

43. Member States were also recommended to agree on the legal nature of the Plan of Action on the theme for 2015.

## **VIII. BRIEFING ON AFRICA AGENDA 2063 AND ITS 1<sup>ST</sup> 10 YEARS PLAN OF ACTION**

44. African Union Department of Strategic Planning provided a briefing on Agenda 2063 and its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

45. The presentation highlighted the structure and scope of the Ten Year Plan, as well as, the results framework. It covered priority areas, specific targets, indicative strategies, policy measures and the roles & responsibilities at the national, regional

and continental levels to guide all stakeholders for the first ten years of its implementation.

46. It was emphasised that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is one of the key elements of the Plan, together with the capacity imperative to identify the skill required to implement the Plan, and the skills shortages that needs to be addressed in order to make it happen.

47. In conclusion, the presentation highlighted that implementation of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan will be catalysed by the 12 Flagship Projects, such as the Continental High Speed Train Network, the Commodity Strategy, to mention a few. Its uniqueness and value addition is on the fact that it has Resource Mobilisation Strategy, which emphasises on the Domestic Resources, plus Communication Strategy for a wider appreciation by the citizenry.

#### **IX. BRIEFING ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW OF PROJECTS UNDER THE 2014 AWD THEME AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW OF THE PROJECTS UNDER THE 2015 THEME OF AWD “EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY”**

48. WGDD presented the outcomes of the review projects under the 2014 AWD Theme and the Outcomes of the Review of the Projects under the 2015 Theme of AWD “Education, Science and Technology”.

49. The meeting was briefed that WGDD secured funding from the Turkish government to implement objectives related to training and sharing of experiences of business women.

50. In 2014, the Steering Committee for the Fund for African Women received 51 project proposals and 30 projects were selected for approval, while 6 projects were rejected due to non-conformity with requirements.

51. In 2015, out of the 125 project proposals received by the Steering Committee, 10 projects were selected for approval, 75 projects were advised to provide additional information prior to approval, 1 project was withdrawn and 39 projects were rejected. The theme for 2016 should be selected by Ministers during the Ministerial Meeting.

52. The discussions that ensued focused on the need to improve the level of implementation of the Fund, concerns related to the establishment of National Committees, and clarification on approved funds.

53. Member States recommended for the AUC to consider extending the Fund and to sensitise Member States about the Fund.

**X. CONSIDERATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION OF THE AU HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT ON THE AU THEME FOR 2015” YEAR OF WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AFRICA AGENDA 2063 AND JOHANNESBURG CALL FOR ACTION**

54. WGDD presented the draft Plan of Action and the Johannesburg Call for Action

55. The presentation focused on the narrative part of the zero draft Plan of Action of the Declaration of the AU Heads of State and Government (HOSG) on the 2015 theme and their Call for Action, which was adopted in June 2015, during the 25th AU Summit in South Africa.

56. This draft Plan of Action captures the six (6) key priorities areas as committed by the Heads of States, the expected outcomes, the strategy for funding, the key stakeholders (both state and non- state actors) and the communication strategy.

57. The presentation recalled that the Call for Action required the AUC to work with Member States to translate, into results, the six commitments of the Heads of State Declaration in line with Agenda 2063, the African Women’s Decade, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

58. In conclusion, Member States were encouraged to input into the document as it will be a common strategy for the AUC and Member States to implement the 2015 Theme.

59. During the discussions that ensued, Member States highlighted the need for the Commission to provide additional information and clarity on the Matrix as well as edit the entire document.

**XI. CONSIDERATION OF PREPARATIONS FOR JANUARY 2016 PRE-SUMMIT ON GENDER**

60. WGDD presented the preparations for the 2016 Gender Pre-Summit.

61. The Gender Pre-Summit held from 17 to 21 January 2016, under the Theme “Africa Year of Human Rights, in particular, with a focus on the Rights of Women”.

62. The overall objective of this Gender Pre-Summit is to strengthen awareness about the human rights of women as essential ingredients to sustainable development and peace, and to assess and monitor progress made in realizing the human rights of women in Africa.

63. The following themes will be discussed during the Gender Pre-Summit: Review of the 2015 Year on Women’s Empowerment; Women’s Rights as Human Rights; Political Participation and Representation of women; Gender Budgeting,

Labour Laws and Women's Economic Empowerment; and Migration, refugees and women's rights.

64. Member States suggested for proper ways to be found to extend invitations timeously to Member States.

## **XII. CONSIDERATION OF THE CONCEPT NOTE AND FRAMEWORK OF THE AU THEME FOR 2016**

65. Mrs. Sibongile Hlatswayo from the AU Department of Political Affairs (DPA) presented the adopted Concept Note and the draft Implementation Framework for the 2016 theme on "Africa Year of Human Rights, in particular, with a focus on the Rights of Women".

66. The AU Assembly declared 2016 as the Year of Human Rights with a focus on the Rights of Women, building on the theme for 2015. A Concept Note and Plan of Action was developed with activities proposed under three cluster areas, namely, Knowledge Management, Advocacy and Outreach and Multi-Sectoral Dialogue.

67. Project 2016 aims to promote renewed commitment for the human rights of women and increased ratification, domestication and implementation of human rights and women's rights instruments.

68. Member States urged that women's rights must be central to the framing of the objectives as well as the activities of Project 2016. Member States further expressed their interest in hosting and conducting activities and actions in line with Project 2016.

## **XIII. UPDATING ON THE SOLEMN DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA (SDGEA) AND PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA (MAPUTO PROTOCOL/ WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROTOCOL).**

69. Ms. Lehau Victoria Maloka, the Head of Division for Coordination and Outreach, WGDD, presented an update on the SDGEA and the Maputo Protocol.

70. The meeting was briefed on the state of ratification of the Maputo Protocol which stands at 37 ratifications, 49 signatories and 17 countries that have not yet ratified the Protocol.

71. The AU encourages Member States that have not yet ratified the Protocol to expedite their ratification processes, especially in light of 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and 2016 as the Year of Human Rights with emphasis on Women's Rights.

72. Some of the challenges experienced in effectively implementing the Protocol were shared. The AU expressed its intention to conduct advocacy activities to assist in the acceleration of the implementation of the Protocol.

73. The presentation highlighted that Articles 12 and 13 of the SDGEA define the reporting obligations of the Member States and the AUC Chairperson on measures taken to implement gender equality and gender mainstreaming at national and regional levels.

74. The Implementation Framework and the Guidelines for Reporting on the SDGEA were adopted by Member States to facilitate the implementation of the SDGEA.

75. The meeting was briefed that 48 Member States have submitted their country reports, while six (6) countries are yet to submit their initial reports. Member States who have not submitted their initial and periodic reports were encouraged to do so.

76. During the discussions that ensued, Member States recommended that the AU should create a database of harmful cultural practices that are experienced throughout the continent. Member States also encouraged the enactment and implementation of access to information laws for women.

#### **XIV. ANY OTHER BUSSINESS**

77. The Chairperson adopted the report of the Experts, which will be presented to Ministers for consideration and adoption.