

We, the African Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs, attending the Ninth African Regional Conference on Women for the twenty-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, held in Addis Ababa on 19 November 2014, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), agencies of the United Nations and other partners,

Reaffirming our commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and the importance of the objectives, principles and goals contained therein, and to scaling up and accelerating their implementation,

Recalling the outcomes of the previous African regional reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

Welcoming the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to declare 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade and the year 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Realizing Africa's Agenda 2063,

Appreciating the leadership of our Heads of State and Government in coming up with the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda,

Commending the progress that has been made in the development and implementation of global, regional and national development frameworks, and the introduction of policies towards gender equality and women's empowerment,

Taking note with concern the uneven progress made on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and the challenges that African countries continue to face in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action,

Concerned that new challenges and emerging issues are arising, such as climate change, conflicts, HIV/AIDS, epidemics, human trafficking, child labour, religious extremism, terrorism, global economic and financial crises and increasing inequality, which threaten to set back progress made so far towards gender equality and the advancement of women and girls across the continent,

Expressing our full solidarity and support to countries affected by the spread of the Ebola virus and commending the efforts of Governments, the African Union Commission, the United Nations, the public, development partners and non-governmental organizations to combat the epidemic,

Concerned about the impact and burden of the epidemic, especially for women and children,

Taking note of Africa's positive development landscape and the ambitiousness of the continent's structural transformation agenda, as spelled out in the African Union's Agenda 2063, which has the potential to scale up investments for the advancement of women and gender equality,

Emphasizing the strong positive correlations between gender equality, women's empowerment and Africa's sustainable development,

Acknowledging and appreciating the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations and women's organizations to the Ninth African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+20) and taking note of the outcomes of their consultative meetings,

Acknowledging the importance of establishing partnerships and strategic alliances with all stakeholders, such as ministries of finance and economic planning and other line ministries, civil society organizations, cultural institutions, the private sector, trade unions, community and religious leaders, research and academic institutions, local government, the media and the international community, to achieve gender equality,

Recognizing that social protection is an important emerging development strategy for inclusive and equitable development for all, including women,

Call to action to achieve gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment, as spelled out in the African Union’s Agenda 2063, by 2030:

- 1) **Call upon** our member States to adopt gender-sensitive planning and budgeting schemes, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the remaining gaps from the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action through strengthened domestic resource mobilization and allocation for women’s and girls’ rights;
- 2) **Call upon** our member States to endorse the adoption of a stand-alone goal on gender equality, the empowerment of women and women’s rights, and to include gender-sensitive targets and indicators in the sustainable development goals, in line with the priorities of the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda;
- 3) **Call upon** international partners, both bilateral and multilateral, including organizations of the United Nations system, to provide adequate technical and financial support for our development efforts;
- 4) **Call upon** our Governments and development partners to give the necessary resources to women’s organizations and initiatives to ensure that women’s rights are protected and that women and girls receive appropriate services;
- 5) **Commit** ourselves to reporting on the implementation of commitments made at the national, regional and global levels in terms of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- 6) **Call upon** our member States to demand accountability from development partners and civil society organizations with regard to how resources for gender equality and women’s empowerment are used;
- 7) **Call upon** the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities, the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations system to support capacity-building, monitor and report on progress made in implementing gender-relevant development programmes and plans, and to ensure that the outcome of the Beijing+20 review is reflected in the work plan of the Committee on Women and Development of the Economic Commission for Africa;
- 8) **Call upon** the member States and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to increase resource allocation to strengthen UN-Women to ensure that it fulfils its mandate as the United Nations entity for coordinating the achievement of the gender equality and empowerment of women goals by the whole United Nations system;
- 9) **Call for** a strong regional accountability framework involving Governments, the private sector and civil society to monitor and track progress with a view to achieving the post-2015 development goals, and particularly the stand-alone goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment;

- 10) **Call for** the strengthening of women's freedom in challenging harmful social and cultural norms and practices that impede women's ability to fully participate in and benefit from economic growth in Africa, as stated in the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- 11) **Call for** investing in data and information systems for monitoring and tracking of gender equality and empowerment;
- 12) **Call upon** Governments and development partners to provide resources to regional economic communities so that they can play their critical role of coordination, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation.

We hereby reaffirm our commitment **to implement, monitor and assess** the international, regional, subregional and national agreements and initiatives entered into by the member States, whose objectives are in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Millennium Development Goals, among others; and to accelerate the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the outcomes of the International Conference on Population and Development, through the following strategic actions:

1. Economic empowerment of women through the creation of decent jobs, poverty reduction, social protection and social security

(a) Systematically review and, if necessary, amend macroeconomic and sector policies to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure inclusive growth and equitable and sustainable development;

(b) Place women at the centre of the continent's industrialization process through the development of appropriate socioeconomic infrastructure, in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063;

(c) Adopt and enforce the implementation of laws allowing women to own land for economic opportunities and to exercise their human rights;

(d) Upscale innovative initiatives to give women more access, ownership and control over factors and means of production such as land, labour, finance, credit, technology, markets and other productive inputs;

(e) Facilitate women's effective participation in and benefit from the agricultural, mining and tourism value chains by giving them the resources and skills they need to improve their economic productivity;

(f) Reduce, recognize and redistribute unpaid care work, which falls disproportionately on women and girls, by investing in infrastructure and time-saving technology and emphasizing shared responsibilities between women and men, girls and boys;

(g) Introduce measures including paid maternity and paternity leave to address the issue of work-life balance and to help those with family responsibilities;

(h) Nurture women's – especially young women's – entrepreneurship skills and talent development, in particular in the agri-business and extractive industries, including mining, by supporting their primary, secondary and tertiary education and professional training, giving them access to resources, and helping them to acquire new ICT skills;

(i) Establish and strengthen domestic funding for social protection mechanisms and interventions, and provide and/or reinforce social safety net services for vulnerable women and girls (especially older women and children with disabilities, female or girl headed households, orphans and other vulnerable children).

2. Education and training

(a) Undertake a comprehensive review and gender analysis of the education curriculum to make it more gender-responsive and remove stereotypes, in compliance with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes the industrialization of the continent;

(b) Adopt a multi-sectoral approach to address negative social and cultural norms and practices including harmful traditional practices such as early marriage that impede girls' retention and achievement at the primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational levels of education and training;

(c) Promote retention, completion and transition by providing incentives such as free and compulsory primary and secondary education and subsidized higher and vocational education to consolidate gains made in gender parity at primary-school level;

(d) Adopt and enforce legislation and other measures, including actions on age-appropriate sexuality and reproductive health training, to end teenage pregnancy, patriarchy, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation;

(e) Advocate for affirmative measures with a view to increasing the number of girls taking up science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects) and ICT at the secondary, tertiary and higher levels;

(f) Provide comprehensive and free early childhood development services as a preparatory phase for quality education for children's enrolment, retention and completion of the education cycle;

(g) Adopt policies to allow pregnant girls to remain in school and return to school after delivery;

(h) Create school environments that are girl-friendly and accessible, through measures that eradicate sexual harassment, kidnapping and trafficking and ensure improved security in schools, protective measures and adequate sanitation facilities;

(i) Provide equitable, inclusive and quality education to ensure that girls with disabilities, orphans, vulnerable children and those in marginalized areas receive an education;

(j) Implement literacy programmes for adult women and girls, and establish schools and alternative institutions for illiterate women and girls, boys and men.

3. Women's reproductive health and HIV/AIDs

(a) Scale up efforts to drastically reduce maternal mortality at least by half through the implementation of innovative policies and programmes, inspired by the continent's best practices such as wellness clinics and nutrition services;

(b) Invest in sexual and reproductive health rights, including by adopting and implementing laws on sexual and reproductive health, awareness raising and information services for teenagers and women, including comprehensive sexual health education, information and services;

(c) Implement programmes that ensure men's shared responsibility, especially with regard to family planning, HIV and sexual and gender-based violence;

(d) Expand the provision of family planning services and contraceptives and access to safe and legal abortion services in accordance with national laws and policies, and protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in the case of sexual assault, rape, incest, in line with the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

(e) Invest in coordinated, integrated and multi-sectoral interventions, scale up the ratio of medical doctors, midwives and nurses to the population, expand obstetric care services, especially in rural and remote areas, using retired health professionals and community volunteers, in the light of the African Union's 2009 Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa;

(f) Facilitate access to information and provide early detection services for cervical and breast cancer and provide free cancer treatment for women;

(g) Improve access for all women and girls to prevention, treatment and drugs to reduce the negative impact of HIV/AIDS among women;

(h) Scale up combined preventive HIV/AIDS measures for young women and girls and expand programmes to eliminate mother-to-child transmission;

(i) Promote the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2177 on the Ebola virus from the African perspective;

(j) Establish a special Ebola fund for women to address the adverse impact of the epidemic on women and girls, including women with disabilities;

(k) Call upon Governments to take appropriate measures to fight against discrimination against women with obstetric fistula and to ensure their medical care and socioeconomic integration into society.

4. Violence against women and girls

(a) Enact and strengthen the enforcement of laws addressing and punishing all forms of violence against women and girls through adequate resource allocation and targeted capacity-building of law enforcement agencies, including the judiciary;

(b) Invest in social mobilization and implement public awareness campaigns targeting, men, boys, women and girls, and religious, traditional and community leaders to eliminate violence against women and girls and end trafficking;

(c) Undertake empirical studies to document the situation, stories, impact and cost of violence against women on families, in the home, in the public sphere and on socio-economic growth and Africa's transformative development agenda;

(d) Invest in the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, location and economic status on violence against women to inform targeted policy interventions and programming;

(e) Set up national monitoring mechanisms for gender-based violence;

(f) Respond to violence against women and girls by ensuring a well-coordinated, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder response that includes provision of efficient gender-responsive medical

services, safe spaces for physical safety and security, legal/judicial response and legal psycho-social support; and observatory and monitoring units for violence against women;

(g) Strengthen policies and practices in all schools, including higher institutions of learning; integrate issues of violence against women and girls into the curriculum to promote dialogue and meaningful engagement of men and boys in addressing violence against women in accordance with national laws;

(h) Revise existing policies to address emerging trends of violence against women and girls such as forced and coerced sterilization and forced abortion of women living with HIV/AIDS;

(i) Ensure access to justice for victims and women survivors including protection of women human rights defenders;

(j) Set up legal funds for poor and underprivileged women and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence;

(k) Strengthen the men's movement for gender equality and systematically and comprehensively build the capacity of men in positions of influence to promote the gender equality agenda;

(l) Continue the implementation of activities initiated under the Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence against Women and Girls.

5. Peace, security and development

(a) Integrate the gender and rights framework within national security sector reforms and ensure that all peacekeeping missions include and promote the rights of women, in order to reduce gender- and sexual-based violence in conflict, eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure that perpetrators of gender- and sexual-based violence are held accountable;

(b) Strengthen and finance the response to terrorist threats and make special provisions for the protection of women and girls, including responses to early warning signs;

(c) Develop, finance and implement national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and all other relevant Security Council resolutions;

(d) Ensure that all peace negotiations, processes and mediation teams include at least 50 per cent representation of women from all sides of the conflict;

(e) Provide appropriate training to women for their effective participation in peace negotiations, peacekeeping missions, peacebuilding processes and humanitarian crises via early warning and response mechanisms.

6. Women in power and decision-making positions

(a) Pass laws to ensure female representation of at least 50 per cent as provided for in the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adopted in 2004, the African Union Commission's Gender Policy, adopted in 2009 and other affirmative actions passed at the subregional and country levels to guarantee that women are fairly represented in all public governance structures – elective, appointive and recruited – at management and decision-making levels, in academia and in the private sector;

(b) Introduce mechanisms to monitor the evolution of women's representation in elective and appointive structures;

(c) Strengthen and provide incentives to political parties to nominate and support female candidates;

(d) Engage with national electoral commissions and boards in order to strengthen political financing laws and guidelines to promote integrity in politics and promote women's participation;

(e) Support training and capacity-building of women in political decision-making in order to translate the numbers into more effective, quality participation and influence;

(f) Invest in and strengthen knowledge-sharing and promote South-South sharing of best practices;

(g) Support and invest in the creation of platforms that celebrate women in social, economic and corporate positions and political leadership, and foster mentorship programmes for young women;

(h) Provide leadership and self-esteem training to young women, including those with disabilities, to enable them to participate in decision-making and leadership roles;

(i) Develop and strengthen high-level gender advisory regional think tanks.

7. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

(a) Reinforce the institutionalization of gender machineries by enforcing their mandate to monitor and evaluate the achievement of agreed-upon gender equality targets and indicators, including by equipping these mechanisms with the requisite staff and financial resources to drive, convene and coordinate policies, programmes and interventions;

(b) Implement measures, including capacity-building measures, to ensure that all ministries and other institutions systematically integrate gender into their work;

(c) Establish and strengthen accountability mechanisms such as gender markers, gender audits and integrated reporting applicable to all public structures and the private sector, in order to track programmes and resources allocated to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment;

(d) Provide adequate resources and mobilize domestic financing, including private sector partnership and financing for national gender and women machinery;

(e) Strengthen the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated and gender-responsive data within all sectors to ensure the effective integration of gender indicators, targets and actions in all other sector ministries policies, programmes and budgets.

8. Human rights of women and girls

(a) Align the legal and judicial system – i.e. laws, standards and policies – with international laws and gender standards and instruments;

(b) Review and revise national constitutions and legal systems to systematically remove all discriminatory laws, norms, practices and policies to make the legal framework conform to international and regional instruments on women's human rights;

(c) Build the capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in gender and women's human rights and support the enforcement of laws to fight discrimination against women and girls and support women to know and claim their rights;

(d) Develop and implement awareness-raising programmes about the rights of women in the official and national languages, aimed at men and teenage boys, to raise awareness of the population on the rights of women and girls and ensure laws and policies that protect human rights of women defenders against stigmatization;

(e) Establish and popularize legal aid funds for underprivileged women;

(f) Protect women and girls from exploitation through social networks and combat cybercrime;

(g) Promote and protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities and improve their social and economic conditions, including with targeted measures and strategies;

(h) Adopt and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

9. Women and the media

(a) Promote women in decision-making positions in state and private media;

(b) Strengthen the access of rural and other underserved women to media, especially by expanding community radio and mobile phone access;

(c) Design, create and support platforms that recognize positive media for gender equality;

(d) Encourage the media to promote public service on critical issues affecting women, such as access to reproductive health information, family planning and the value of girls' education, and to engage in positive dialogues with men and boys on equality, non-discrimination and violence against women;

(e) Introduce awareness-raising programmes on women's rights, including in local languages;

(f) Develop and implement policies and laws creating an enabling environment that prevent the use of social and other forms of new media as instruments of violence against women and girls, exploitation of girls and cybercrime.

10. Women, the environment and climate change

(a) Make climate knowledge and information gender-responsive and accessible to women, especially rural women;

(b) Design and implement programmes that harvest and value women's indigenous knowledge and practices, including in innovation processes;

(c) Build capacities in environmental public institutions to integrate gender concerns into policymaking and programming for equitable sustainable development;

(d) Strengthen women's capacities to manage and prevent natural disasters;

(e) Undertake ex-ante gender analyses of climate change risks to women's livelihoods and prepare emergency and long-term preparedness to mitigate those risks;

(f) Invest in climate-sensitive and gender-sensitive agricultural extension, including adaptation and mitigation programmes;

(g) Ensure that external and domestic climate finance targets women's specific needs, constraints and perspectives, and provides incentives for women farmers to be stewards of natural resources;

(h) Provide access to clean water and renewable energy technologies to all households, particularly to rural women, including by investing in and promoting the development of alternative safe and clean energies (such as hydropower and solar) in order to reduce reliance on non-sustainable energy sources;

(i) Develop comprehensive gender-sensitive policies that address participation in mitigation of the environment impact of large-scale mining and extractive activities;

(j) Promote mass media campaigns on climate change eventualities such as natural disasters, with warning systems to save the lives of women and girls.

11. The girl child

(a) Continue to strengthen efforts to completely eliminate early child marriages by criminalizing the practice and enforcing the age of marriage of 18 for girls, in accordance with international norms and standards;

(b) Criminalize all forms of female genital mutilation, early child and forced marriages, and other harmful traditional practices, and disallow judicial consent to marriage in sexual violence cases;

(c) Align all laws and policies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

(d) Adopt and enforce the International Labour Organization's conventions, recommendations and standards to protect girls from child labour;

(e) Protect girls against all forms of exploitation, including trafficking and sexual slavery by armed groups.