

Africa Ministerial preparatory meeting for CSW58 – Outcome Document

6-7 February 2014

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Preamble

Ministers responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs from the Africa region, experts, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, United Nations Agencies and Civil Society Organizations met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 6 and 7 February 2014 to prepare for the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the priority theme: ***“Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls”***.

The meeting built on previous commitments at international and regional levels, in particular the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”; as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol thereto; the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

The main objective of the Africa Regional CSW58 Preparatory and Consultative Meeting was to build consensus and to develop a strategy for influencing the post2015 development agenda for gender equality and women’s empowerment. **The expected outcome was for participants to develop key messages based on previous reviews, consultations and lessons learned in anticipation of CSW58 and the dialogues on the post-2015 development agenda. The reference framework was the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda.**

The meeting adopted the following outcome

Key messages:

The MDGs have played an important role in increasing attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment, but progress has been slow and uneven. Many key gender equality issues were not addressed. A transformative approach is therefore needed for real change to occur for women and girls, both as beneficiaries of and contributors to the eradication of poverty and achievement of sustainable development.

1. CSW58 must call for a transformative stand-alone goal to achieve gender equality, women’s human rights and women’s empowerment to be included in the post-2015 development agenda. It should be comprehensive and include concrete targets and indicators. CSW58 must also call for the full mainstreaming of gender equality perspectives across the entire post-2015 development agenda. We must pursue this twin-track approach in all processes and outcomes

of the post-2015 development agenda and in particular take the lead in the context of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations General Assembly.

2. The women of Africa call for a sixth pillar to complement the African Common Position to cover gender equality and women's empowerment, together with concrete targets and indicators in all the other Pillars to further strengthen the African Common Position.

Given the task ahead at CSW58 which is to accelerate achievement of the MDGs for women and girls and help build a strong gender equality foundation for the post-2015 development agenda, the meeting adopted the following **key recommendations**:

Women's Economic Empowerment

- The new framework should take a comprehensive approach to women's economic empowerment and recognize women's contribution to the economy. It should go well beyond women's work in the informal sector and commit to decent work for women and to investing in, and empowering women in productive sectors of the economy, and to social protection for women. It should fully take into account women's unpaid work and recognize and quantify it within the system of national accounts.
- Women must have access to, control over and ownership of productive resources including financial resources, land and property rights, water and energy, for transformative change in women's lives. In addition, we need to increase access to technologies by women that will help them benefit from the value chain system.
- The gender gap in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and in Science and Technology must be closed. ICT is a tool for economic and political empowerment, access to information, access to markets, networking and increased opportunities and there should be mainstreaming of ICT to leapfrog the gender digital divide.
- We need to strengthen the role of women in trade, including cross border trade and in trade negotiations; in value addition in agriculture in Africa and beyond; in extractive industries; and we need to increase their participation in diversified economies. We need to make markets safe for women. Infrastructure such as roads is needed to improve women's access to markets and productive resources. Rural women have a key role in strengthening food security and sustainable development.

Social Transformation

- Ending violence against women and girls is a glaring omission in the MDG framework, including in MDG 3, and must be addressed in the new framework.

- The new framework must provide for women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services.
- Ending female genital mutilation, child, early and forced marriage and early pregnancies is essential for the health, education and empowerment of the girl child.
- Environmental protection and climate change and their implications for gender equality have not received adequate attention. Issues such as desertification, deforestation and natural disasters and their gender-specific impacts deserve attention.
- While progress has been made in education, especially primary school enrolment, much greater focus has to be put on the quality of education. We also need to focus on the content of education, including of literacy education, and the knowledge, skills and capacities that education provides. Retention of girls and young women, completion of education, narrowing the gap in achievement between girls and boys, and the transition to the world of work are critical to any future agenda.
- Understanding and addressing the root causes of gender inequality, such as patriarchal social norms, practices and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls is necessary. Unequal power relations are to be addressed, including in the home where violence and discrimination against women and girls remains pervasive. We need to involve traditional leaders, men and boys, and work with men as partners and allies to promote positive values of our cultures and end harmful practices.
- Social protection with a special focus on women and girls must be an integral part of a future agenda to enable inclusive growth.
- Increased attention must be given to maternal health, prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT), family planning, halting HIV and AIDS and advancing the rights of HIV positive women and girls, within the broader context of women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Other women's health issues, such as cervical, breast and other types of cancers that affect women need greater attention. We need to address the socio-cultural barriers that affect all aspects of women's health.

Governance, Peace and Security

- Peace and security are inextricably linked to sustainable development and enjoyment of human rights. War and conflicts are a major obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs, and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. We need to strengthen and accelerate implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security. Women must be recognized as key actors and agents of peace in any holistic engagement towards sustainable development.

- Women's full and equal participation, empowerment and decision making at all levels is fundamental for Africa's transformative agenda. Temporary special measures, including affirmative action, remain relevant in this regard.

Institutional Framework

- Financing for gender equality is a major challenge. It is now time to match political commitment with the allocation of adequate resources, and the future framework must provide that countries must put in place a minimum of budgetary commitment towards gender equality. We need to mobilize domestic resources and reduce dependence on foreign aid for gender equality. Macro-economic frameworks, national development plans and programmes and gender-responsive budgeting are tools to facilitate the allocation of resources to gender equality in the various sectors. We also need to reduce waste and learn to do 'more with less' through better planning and increase prioritization of interventions to maximize resources and outcomes. We also need to tackle corruption, strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms and channel the savings to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- It is urgent to strengthen the capacity and financing of national machineries for gender equality to fulfill their mandates for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Public – private partnerships and South- South cooperation in support of gender equality need to be promoted.
- Collection, analysis and disaggregation of data by gender, sex, age and other socio-economic indices is critical for planning, measuring progress and for targeted policy-making to address gaps and challenges.
- We need to advance clear mechanisms for assessing performance, results and accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment. We need robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with 'smart' indicators that address the goals and targets that we set for ourselves so that we can properly monitor and evaluate what we commit to do.

As we commit to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, we recognize that women are not a homogenous group. Different groups, such as rural women, women in urban settings, elderly women, HIV-positive women, women with disabilities, refugee women, internally displaced women and women in pastoralist communities have specific needs that require targeted interventions.

2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the half-way point of the African Women's Decade, 2010-2020. We pledge to intensify

our efforts towards full and accelerated implementation, through renewed political commitment, extensive social mobilization and mobilization of new investments in gender equality. We will undertake comprehensive commemorative activities involving all stakeholders, in particular civil society, to reinvigorate the women's movement and mobilize a new generation of young women and men so that together, we can achieve the goal of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment.