

BEIJING +25: AFRICA CSO FORUM, ADDIS ABABA, 28 OCTOBER 2019

## AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

Chair of the STC, representatives of the member states, Regional Economic Commissions, Pan African Parliament, the AU gender and development departments, UNECA and UNW

We, the representatives of civil society in our diversity drawn from across the continent in the 5 regions of Africa and the Diaspora, gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from October, 28 – 30 for the CSO Forum on the Beijing+25 Review, hereby submit the following statement and recommendations in view of our joint audit of the status of African women 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Reference to women in our statement includes women in all their diversities.

25 years after the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women held in Beijing and the resultant Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action some progress has been recorded towards realising women's rights as envisioned in Beijing. Most of these gains have been in the nature of legal reform and Africa is not short of laws and policies. For instance, most African states (42 out of 55) have adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The constitutions of most countries in Africa have some measure of gender equality protection with all constitutions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex. There is also an increase in the enactment of laws targeted towards addressing concerns specific to women and girls in all their diversity.

In spite of significant progress, the status of women remains largely unequal. This can be largely attributed to impunity by duty bearers with regard to their women's

rights commitments as well as social attitudes and norms that normalize, condone and perpetuate the inequality of women. We wish therefore to make **ten** key recommendations to ensure the full realisation of women's rights and protection in law and in practice.

1. States should accelerate the **implementation of the various laws, policies and frameworks** that have been adopted to address discrimination of women and gender inequalities. In doing so, states should consider the intersectional identities of women considering the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls and young women, women with disabilities and sexual minorities among other diversities.

We call specific attention to the **review of laws** that entrench discrimination and unequal power relations; and the **development of laws** to protect women in private and public spheres. We highlight the following areas:

- a. Family laws including equality in marriage & property
  - b. Violence against women and the legal recognition of all forms of violence against women and harmful practices
  - c. Sexual and reproductive health rights including reduction of maternal mortality, access to contraception, safe abortion as articulated in the Maputo Protocol, comprehensive sexuality education and quality treatment care & support for women and girls living with HIV
  - d. Legal provisions that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or body diversity
2. States should actively **promote the transformation of negative social norms**, harmful cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes which often legitimise and exacerbate the inequality of women particularly in addressing violence against women and prevalent exclusions of women in socio-economic spheres.
  3. We are calling for AU member states to work towards achieving the **50:50 gender parity representation requirement** that they have committed to in

the AU gender policy. This should be achieved through putting in place affirmative action measures as well as undertaking other social, economic and political measures that alleviate women's historical disadvantages. In addition to enhancing representation through numbers, states need to put in place measures to reform the militaristic, extractivist, sexual pacification, violent, predatory and exclusionary political culture that impedes women's participation.

4. We call for an end to armed conflict. We urge states to ensure peace and security and the participation of women in all peace and security processes. Gender responsive early warning systems and
5. We call for the **structural transformation of African economies** in the following ways:
  - a. States should adopt **progressive tax systems** that ensure resources for social services (education, health & social protection), undertake **gender budgeting** and adopt **national action plans** that prioritise women's rights concerns
  - b. States should **engender their national development plans and macro-economic policies** and ensure that they are gender transformative
  - c. Governments should **increase allocations for social protection** in order to support women and girls to reduce and redistribute domestic and unpaid care work
6. Governments should recognise and respect the women's rights movement as legitimate actors in development and decision making. Governments should therefore refrain from dismantling and **shrinking existing civic spaces** and should reverse all legislation and actions that have closed space for citizens. Governments should create an enabling environment and provide specific support to organizations defending the rights of women and girls in all their diversities.

7. African States to review and strengthen national frameworks on gender and disability inclusion to ensure the representation and effective decision making of women and girls with disabilities within development policies and programming including explicitly prohibiting discrimination and oppression on the basis of gender and disability

We further urge African States to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa which was adopted at the 30th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2018. The Charter focuses on promoting an upholding the rights of people with disabilities living in Africa and has specific language on the rights of women with disabilities.

8. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the **adverse effects of globalisation and environmental degradation** that result from the activities of multi-national and national corporations. States have a responsibility to address and mitigate climate change that adversely affect women preserve and protect the environment by upholding human rights principles such as through provision of clean water, the elimination of exploitative trade and practices in the extractives industry, economic and labour practices that harm women and girls in all their diversities.
9. For evidence-based policies and interventions, we call on governments to invest in **strengthening a pluralistic ecosystem of data** which collects, systematises, analyses and disseminates quantitative and qualitative data in order to effectively monitor and evaluate potential disparities in access to social services with full respect to confidentiality and privacy. Data should be disaggregated by sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, geographic location, disability, migration and other status.
10. States should create special funds and invest in value addition and innovative processing technologies for **grassroot, marginalised, indigenous**

**and rural women** as a strategy to improve their livelihood and increased participation in the economy and government at all levels.

Lastly, **African young women and adolescent girls** do not lead single issue lives and the emerging issues that they face reinforce the need for interlinked and interconnected solutions that address structural inequalities specifically in the areas of education, health, decent work and social protection.

We reiterate the need for States to recommit to women's rights, allocate substantive and sustainable resources particularly financial resources, investing in gender data and evidence that will inform policy, reduce inequalities and meaningfully support the advancement of the gender agenda.