



Press Release On Working Breakfast Meeting Of AUC Campaign To End Child Marriage In Africa, African First Ladies And Heads of State and Government Addis Ababa, Ethiopia- 30 January 2015

Africa Vows: “We must win the Battle by 2020 with Zero Cases of Early Marriage!” - His Excellency, The President of Chad, Mr. Idriss Deby Itno

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 30 January 2015: African Union Heads of State and Government and African First Ladies on the ‘AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa’ gathered this morning for key breakfast meeting on accelerating efforts to end child marriage. The event, which was hosted by His Excellency, the President of Chad, Mr. Idriss Deby Itno and the First Lady of Chad, Mme Hinda Deby Itno, focused on mobilizing continental awareness of the campaign, build on recent achievement and make greater strides to prevent the harmful effects of child marriage in Africa

Child marriage is a social problem and a humanitarian problem according to His Excellency, the President of Chad, Mr. Idriss Deby Itno. He called upon all those concerned and especially the First Ladies of the AU Member States to be front runners in changing the continent and win the battle by 2020 with zero cases of early marriage. He stated that Africa should uphold positive values of traditional society and say “No!” to negative values such as child marriage, female genital mutilations and same sex marriages.

H.E. Mme Hinda Deby Itno the first lady of Chad admonished the practice stating that early child marriage caused early pregnancies which would lead to death. “Eliminating early marriages allows young girls to fully develop and contribute to the community”, she added. She urged heads of state and decision makers to spearhead a sensitization campaign at both national and family level to end the practice.

H.E. Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia outlined the steps that the country had undertaken to end child marriages. He noted that Ethiopia is the first country to launch the campaign to End Child Marriage at a national level followed by Niger. He underscored that the campaign requires strong political will, needs to start at the political level and called for strong political will and commitment.

H.E. Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko in his opening speech said: “the campaign is set to face challenges as entrenched traditional practices and ideas embedded in the mindset of a people are hard to decay or be extracted easily. But our focus on the prospects- the prospects of a better and brighter future for the girl child, is more convincing and a greater weapon than the challenges of pulling us back into the abyss of an age old and nefarious tradition that has no future for the girl child.”

H.E. Dr. Kaloko’s speech heralded hope that the challenges should not hold the continent back, he noted: “It is our hope that countries where the practice is prevalent, would view the campaign as an opportunity to harmonize their national laws in line with regional, continental and international instruments on the rights of the child. Moreover, we hope that member states will seize the opportunity to ensure the enactment of laws against the practice as well as step up measures to punish perpetrators who find pleasure in destroying the innocence and the future of the girl child.”

Real life testimonies of victims of early child marriage were heard during the event.

About AU Campaign To End Child Marriage in Africa:

The historic Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa was launched on 29 May, 2014 during the 4th AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development. The main aim of the Campaign is to accelerate and invigorate the movement to end child marriage by:

- a. Supporting national policy actions in the protection and promotion of human rights, especially with a view to addressing violence against girls and women and promoting gender equitable social norms;
- b. Mobilizing continental awareness of and engagement to end child marriage,
- c. Supporting the removal barriers and bottlenecks to law enforcement to prosecute perpetrators of child marriage,
- d. Increasing the capacity of non-state actors to undertake evidence based policy advocacy and enhancing the participation of young people through new media technologies, monitoring and evaluation among others