

AFRICAN UNION

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DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE
3rd AU HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT

"The Contributions of Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Achieving Gender Equality in Africa: Stocktaking, Opportunities and Accountability"

Date: 08 – 09 July, 2016

Kigali, Republic of Rwanda

**African Union Commission's
Women, Gender & Development Directorate**

I. INTRODUCTION

The African Union High Level Panel on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (AU HLP on GEWE) was instituted in June 2014, by Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.823 (XXV) at its 25th Ordinary Session based on provisions of Commitment 1 of the 2009 AU Gender Policy¹ and the Declaration of the 5th Ordinary Session of AU Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs in 2013.

The inaugural HLP was held in September 2013 under the theme "The Post 2015 Agenda for Women within the Context of Economic Empowerment". The second edition of the HLP was organized in June 2015, under the theme "Financial inclusion of Women in Agribusiness" and followed 2 critical key priorities areas of the AU theme of that year i.e. Economic empowerment of women & Agriculture.

This 3rd HLP will be aligned with the 2016 AU theme of the "African Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on the Rights of Women", under the theme "The Contributions of Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Achieving Gender Equality in Africa: Stocktaking, Opportunities and Accountability". It will take place from 08 – 09 July 2016 on the margins of the 27th AU Summit in July 2016, in Kigali, Rwanda.

II. RATIONALE OF THE HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS

It is widely recognized that Africa is endowed with some of the most progressive legal instruments compared to the rest of the world. There is however a disconnect between the ratio of legal instruments adopted and their effective implementation at national level, and recognizing that countries register varying levels of compliance.

This HLP will leverage the AU 2016 theme "African Year on Human's Rights with a particular focus on the Rights of Women" to take stock of progress, identify innovative ways of promoting compliance and raise awareness on critical gaps that must be addressed to enhance prospects for inclusive and sustainable development.

Political will and commitment are considered critical success factors of Agenda 2063. The HLP provides an opportunity to understand the challenges hindering implementation of legal commitments to improve the conditions of women and girls around the continent and strengthen systems that are likely to reverse the tide and promote a much stronger compliance among stakeholders.

While commendable progress continues to be made, it is also an acceptable reality that despite the existence of many well-intended mechanisms such as the ones highlighted above, African women still long to see their enforcement in a satisfactory manner. Accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened to ensure that concrete actions are taken to enable women and young girls to fully and adequately enjoy the rights in the treaties ratified by their

¹ Commitment 1: "High Level Policy Dialogues, consultations, think tank reviews and technical reviews on aspects of gender equality, gender justice and upliftment for African women"

countries. There are still many legal, economic, social, cultural and religious barriers that deny women access to their rights. Understanding these challenges, would allow for a better development of strategies to reverse the tide and ensure proper mechanisms are set to monitor the implementation of these instruments.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE 3rd AU HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON GEWE

The main objective of the 3rd AU HLP on GEWE, is to critically assess the state of implementation of the Maputo Protocol, with a view to generating ideas and identifying strategies to achieve greater execution of commitments by Member States, as well as to review how the mandates of various AU organs can leverage the establishment and implementation of accountability and monitoring mechanisms to protect women's rights in line with the Maputo Protocol

The specific objectives of the 3rd AU HLP on GEWE are to:

- ⇒ Collaborate with AU Policy Organs and relevant Civil Society Organisations in identifying the challenges and opportunities to recognize and protect women's human rights despite the adoption and ratification of regional instruments such as the Maputo Protocol;
- ⇒ Take stock of the current status of women's human rights in Africa, in terms of progress accomplished with respect to their social, economic, political and cultural rights;
- ⇒ Share and exchange best practices & success stories on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by Member States;
- ⇒ Secure concrete commitment from Member States to achieve universal ratification of the Maputo Protocol by 2020.

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE AU HIGH LEVEL PANEL ON GEWE

The expected outcomes of the AU HLP are:

- ⇒ A comprehensive, publishable, analytical report with clear recommendations for the AUC, AU and its organs, RECS, Member States, Civil Society Organisations, Development Partners and the Private Sector on accelerating the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol;
- ⇒ The outcomes of the 3rd AU HLP are integrated into the AU HoSG's Declaration on the AU Theme for 2016 which, will be adopted during the 27th Summit in Kigali.

V. PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE AU HLP on GEWE

The AU HLP on GEWE will attract 250 participants as follows:

- ⇒ African Union Ministers responsible for Gender Equality and Women's Affairs;
- ⇒ African Union Organs with a human rights mandate, such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Court on Human and People's Rights, etc;
- ⇒ National gender machineries such as Commissions on Gender Equality and Human Rights Commissions dealing with gender equality;

- ⇒ Civil Society Organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment issues, including, among others, trade unions, youth organisations, people with disabilities, particularly disabled women, female traditional leaders, academics, especially female scholars;
- ⇒ Regional Economic Communities and other regional mechanisms;
- ⇒ Private sector

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE 3rd AU HLP on GEWE

The 3rd Edition of the AU HLP on GEWE will be held from 08 – 09 July, 2016, on the margins of the 27th AU Ordinary Summit and hosted by the Republic of Rwanda. The HLP will be preceded by a meeting of the Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Gender and Women Empowerment on 7 July 2016. On 11 and 12 July, 2016, the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) will convene a civil society summit.

VII. WORKING LANGUAGES OF THE AU HLP ON GEWE

Simultaneous interpretation will be available in English and French