

AFRICAN UNION

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DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Gender- Based Violence

Under the theme:

“Fight Sexual and Gender Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons”

Mandela Hall

AUC Headquarters

25 November – 17 December, 2019

1. Introduction

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence is an international Campaign to end violence against women and to advocate for the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Campaign runs annually from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights).

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign is therefore used as an organizing strategy by individuals, organizations and governments around the globe to advocate for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. The Campaign calls on women and men, old and youth in all parts of the world to take action in their communities, play their part and stand up against violence against women and girls. Since its inception in 1991, the Campaign has generated an increased awareness about the negative consequences of violence against women and girls.

The 2019 global theme for the Campaign is "Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands against Rape!" The African Union (AU) theme is: **"Orange Africa: Fight Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence Against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons"**. This is aligned with the 2019 AU theme of "Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa".

The African Union Commission will observe the 16 Days of Activism Campaign and among others, host a Panel Discussion on Sexual Violence in Conflict and an Exhibition titled "The Body as a Battlefield". The Panel Discussions and the Exhibition will be organized by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE on WPS) and the Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) of the Peace and Security Department (PSD) in partnership with the Norwegian Mission to the African Union, the Nobel Peace Centre and the Mukwege Foundation.

2. Rationale

Sexual violence has been used throughout history in conflict situations and has now become a well-integrated strategy of warfare. Sexual and gender-based violence against refugees, in particular, has been both a cause of forced displacement and a terrible consequence of the breakdown of family and community structures that accompanies displacement. It has also been perpetrated by some of the very people who have been entrusted with the task of protecting refugees and displaced persons.¹

Each year, countless women and children flee violence in their home countries and take an uncertain journey in the hope of finding safety in a new place as refugees, returnees or internally displaced persons. Many are vulnerable to gender-based violence in transit and even at their points of destination. Even as they flee conflict zones, women and children remain at risk.

¹ UNHCR, Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally displaced Persons, Guidelines for Prevention and Response, May 2003

Smugglers often target women and girls traveling alone by attempting to coerce those with limited financial resources into exchanging sex for transport or meals.

Millions of refugees and displaced women's lives have been destroyed, their families disintegrated, and communities hammered by sexual violence. In this regard, there is a need to give this scourge higher visibility, strengthen the prevention mechanisms and enhance the accountability and justice systems so that the perpetrators are brought to book.

The African Union (AU) views sexual violence against women as one of the critical impediments to women's realization of their fundamental rights including the rights to life, human dignity, peace, justice, social and economic development. Among others, the AU adopted and is implementing the AU Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse as well as the Policy on Conduct and Discipline for Peace Support Operations. The main focus of the policy is on Peace Keeping Operations to ensure that they are managed that promotes and protects human rights and empowers and protects women and girls in particular, as well as men and boys, against sexual and gender-based violence.² The AU Peace and Security Council Communique of its 461th meeting of 14 of October 2019 on sexual violence in conflict situations in Africa, underlined the need for continued mobilization to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and children, including kidnaping. It further called on Member States to strengthen legislative measures to combat sexual violence and facilitate the investigation of such acts and the prosecution of their authors, and to take all steps required to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual violence, including through the provision of adequate health services and support in terms of livelihood.³

In addition, the UN Security Council adopted in April 2019, Resolution 2467, which calls for survivor-centered approaches in the prevention and responses to sexual violence in conflict situations. The Resolution is comprehensive and it strengthens monitoring and evaluation arrangements as well as sanctions against those who committed sexual violence.

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It is in this regard that the African Union Commission (AUC)'s 16 days of Activism Campaign for 2019 puts a spotlight on fighting sexual and gender-based violence, especially against refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. The AUC will observe the 16 Days of Activism Campaign and among others, host a Panel Discussion on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Nobel Peace Prize Exhibition titled "The Body as a Battlefield". The Exhibition is about the work of Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, co-recipients of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize on their fight against sexual violence as a weapon of war. The Panel Discussions and the Exhibition will

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/african-union-policy-prevention-and-response-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-peace>

³ <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc.461.com.sexual-violence.14.10.2014.pdf>

be organized by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) with the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE on WPS) in partnership with the Norwegian Mission to the African Union, the Nobel Peace Centre and the Mukwege Foundation.

The Nobel Peace Prize 2018, awarded to Dr. Denis Mukwege, gives the topic sorely needed help in this regard, and the Nobel Peace Prize Exhibition will help bring the message out to the world. The Nobel Peace Prize Exhibition hence offers a unique opportunity to address sexual violence in war and conflict and to raise awareness and build a strong national and global pressure to the fight against this scourge.

2. Objectives and Outcomes

The overall objective of the Campaign is to raise awareness about violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict situations and its negative consequences especially on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons.

The specific objectives are to:

- Mobilize individuals, organizations and Member States to take collective responsibility to fight against sexual and gender based violence against women and girls including Refugees, Returnees and IDPs;
- Agree on strategies to strengthen preventive mechanisms as well as accountability and justice systems to bring perpetrators to book;
- Secure fresh commitment to accelerate implementation of commitments to prevent and end violence against women, including sexual violence in conflict.

The Expected Outcomes are:

- Awareness raised and stakeholders mobilized to take collective responsibility to fight against sexual and gender based violence against women and girls including Refugees, Returnees and IDPs;
- Strategies agreed on to strengthen preventive mechanisms as well as accountability and justice systems to bring perpetrators to book;
- Fresh commitment secured to accelerate implementation of commitments to prevent and end violence against women, including sexual violence in conflict.

3. Organization/Proposed activities

The 2019 16 Days of Activism Campaign will be organized around the following activities:

1. AUC Chairperson's Message at the beginning of the Campaign to raise awareness and encourage different stakeholders to join the international Campaign and promote the eradication of all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in conflict situations, Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons;

2. Panel Discussion on Sexual Violence in Conflict on 3 December, 2019 from 14:30 to 16.00;
3. The Nobel Peace Prize Exhibition from 3 to 17 December, 2019 about the work of Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, co-recipients of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize on the fight against sexual violence as a weapon of war.
4. Social media Campaign on facebook, twitter and other social media platforms.
5. “Oranging” the AU compound with orange banners - the approved color of the Campaign.
6. Distribution of promotional materials related to the 16 days of Activism Campaign Against Gender- Based Violence

4. Organizers

The 16 Days Campaign will be organized by the Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD), the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE on WPS) and the Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP) of the Peace and Security Department (PSD) in partnership with the Norwegian Mission to the African Union, the Nobel Peace Centre and the Mukwege Foundation

5. Participants

While the members of the AUC community will participate in the campaign from 25 November, the Panel Discussions will draw participation from:

- AUC Senior Leaders and officials
- High Level Government Representatives from the Federal Republic of Ethiopia
- 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Dr. Denis Mukwege
- High Level Representatives of the Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa
- AU Ambassadors
- UN Agencies
- International Development Partners
- CSOs including women, youth and persons with disabilities
- Media

6. Languages

The Panel Discussion will be conducted in four AU official languages, Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

7. Date and Venue

The 16 Day of Activism Campaign will be observed between 25 November and 10 December, 2019. The Exhibition will be on display between 03 and 17 December, 2019. Panel Discussions on Sexual Violence in Conflict will be held on 03 December, 2019.