GENDER PRE-FORUM TO THE 12TH HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE: TRENDS, PROSPECTS, AND CHALLENGES

THEME:

(THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN)
DELIVERING THE PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION

CONCEPT NOTE

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
04 OCTOBER 2023
A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Women, specifically African women, have been trading before trade agreements and champions of cross-border trading for generations despite the availability of legal and normative provisions. According to APRM\(^1\), women’s informal cross-border trading can help lower unemployment, curb urban migration, help alleviate poverty, and contribute to food security. Although understated, women’s role in creating community cohesion, sustainable peace, and stability along with the facilitation of trade and peace is a commodity for sustainable development.

Women, mostly young women, make up above half\(^2\) of Africa’s population and are pivotal for the Continent’s democratic governance and socioeconomic development. Women are the first responders and victims during times of conflict and insecurity. Most often during conflicts, women are targeted, victimized, and displaced while taking the burden of care in the family Unit. They have mostly been confined, bogged down by cultural, systemic, and structural disadvantages that fail to recognize or acknowledge their role in leadership, or in decision-making processes, rather than only recognizing their traditional role in family.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), envisioned to facilitate movement of goods and services among African Countries is hoped to create job opportunities, facilitate trade and contribute to sustainable development. Although a groundbreaking agreement that has taken the Continent by storm and received wide acclaim, the AfCFTA’s success is hinged on several factors that can be a hindrance or an enabler – one of the major ones being women’s meaningful participation.

The implementation of the AfCFTA is crucial to Africa’s citizens, and if women are given the right to be on the front lines as key players for its implementation, the Agreement can have a positive multiplier effect on the Continent. On the other hand, women have the potential to use the AfCFTA to improve their own livelihoods and by extension of their families and communities. The involvement of women as agents of peace through trade, and a call for gender-responsible implementation is crucial, and the AfCFTA must not be another missed opportunity that widens the gender equality gap, rather it must be a vehicle for equality and mainstream gender-responsive actions.

African women have always been at the forefront of the fight for Africa’s best interests and it's high time we prioritize their role in governance, peace, and development. To discuss solutions and warrant the inclusion of women’s voices in conversations that can impact the future, women will have an opportunity to deliberate and discuss the AfCFTA, democratic governance, and peace dividends on this year’s Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th High-Level Dialogue, through highlighting their perspectives, historical role and add value to enhancing the nexus between peace, security, and the AfCFTA.

The Gender Pre-Forum to the High-Level dialogue is organized annually to provide women with a safe and collaborative space to discuss issues that are of critical importance to the Continent. The African Governance Platform (AGP) has organized this year’s Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th High-Level Dialogue under the theme of “Women’s Role in delivering peace dividends through the implementation of the AfCFTA” on 4 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

B. ABOUT THE GENDER PRE-FORUM

The Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th HLD will be convened under the auspices of the AGA-APSA Secretariat, Women Engagement Strategy (WES). The focus of the Pre-Forum is to provide a safe

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\(^1\) A Study on the opportunities in the AfCFTA for Women in the Informal Cross-border trade, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/41579-doc-STUDY_ON_OPPORTUNITIES_IN_THE_AFCFTA_FOR_WOMEN_IN_INFORMAL_AND_CROSS-BORDER_TRADE.pdf

space for women to contribute to the discourse of the implementation of the AfCFTA and interlinks to
democratic governance and ensure tangible peace dividends happen.

Deliberations will contribute to policy discussions on the theme of the year by AU Policy Organs. The
Pre-Forum also aims to harness women's insights, capacities, and creativity through inter-generational
and inter-regional exchanges.

C. GOAL

The overall goal of the Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th HLD is to provide a collaborative, open, and
inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful participation of women's role to deliver peace
dividends through the implementation of the AfCFTA.

D. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the Gender Pre-Forum are to:

1. To provide space for reflections focusing on the historical role of women in democratic
governance, peace, and socioeconomic development;
2. To increase understanding of the existing normative and institutional frameworks on gender
equality, women in leadership and decision-making processes;
3. To increase knowledge, values, and best practices of women in trade, socioeconomic
development and its contribution to sustainable peace; and

E. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes will be derived from the Gender Pre-Forum:

1. Increased understanding of the role of women in democratic governance, peace, and
socioeconomic development;
2. Enhance understanding of the existing normative and institutional frameworks on gender
equality, women in leadership and decision-making processes;
3. Increased knowledge, values, and best practices of women in trade, socio-economic
development, and its contribution to sustainable peace; and
4. Coordinate amplified voices of women on the implementation of the AfCFTA, democratic
governance, and other interlinked issues.

F. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be derived from the Gender Pre-Forum:

1. An outcome statement of the conversations;
2. Proceedings report;
3. One (01) Policy Brief;
4. Press Releases, topical social media clips, and sound bites; and
5. Excerpts will be posted on Social Media Engagement (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram).

G. THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE GENDER PRE FORUM

1. KEY NOTE ADDRESS: UNPACKING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Under this thematic session, the
speakers will have an open discussion on establishing the role of women historically as
contributors to democratic governance and socio-economic development. This session will set the
tone and raise questions and ideas that will be the basis of the discussions for the following
sessions.
2. GENDER RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFCFTA TO ENSURE PEACE DIVIDENDS: This session will focus on the normative frameworks of the AU, RECs, and Member States to ensure the AfCFTA will not be a missed opportunity to materialize gender equality through gender-responsive actions.

3. LISTENING TO WOMEN IN TRADING: CAN TRADE CONTRIBUTE TO REALIZING AFRICA’S PEACE DIVIDEND? This session will focus on listening to women and men who have experience working in informal cross-border trading and hear their opinion about how trading can contribute to peace and vice versa – learning from women that have been trading before trade agreements.

4. AFRICA TALKS: This session is designed as an intergenerational conversation to allow the exchange of experiences and showcase women’s contributions to democratic values and socioeconomic development. This session will feature women’s best practices and highlight their key contributions in the areas of discussion.

H. METHODOLOGY
The convening will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberation. Discussions will be conducted through several interactive strategies including, keynote addresses, Panel Discussions, deep dive conversations with high-profile individuals and experts, and Africa Talks.

The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as a mix of policy and practitioner perspectives in the conversations along with showcasing practical initiatives.

The Gender Pre-Forum will also feature interviews, robust social media engagement, informative threads on sessions and sound bites, and other innovative means to spur debate online. This is also intended to engage a larger audience in the deliberations and disseminate the outcomes.

I. PARTICIPATION
Participants at the Pre-Forum will be drawn from:

1. Gender-focussed organizations working on democracy, governance, and Human Rights in general and specific thematic areas under consideration during this Pre-Forum;
2. AU Member States, including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies that focus on good governance, democracy, and Human Rights;
3. Selected Think Tanks and Academic Research Institutions;
4. Selected Media Practitioners;
5. Artist, Cultural, and Heritage organizations;
6. Representatives of the AGP;
7. International organizations, Development Partners, and UN Agencies; and
8. Diaspora; and

J. DATES AND LOCATION
The gender Pre-Forum will be convened on 4 October 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

K. PARTNERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL, AND MANAGEMENT
The Gender Pre-Forum to the HLD is an institutionalized initiative of the AGP aimed at facilitating women’s participation in policy deliberations on AU themes linked to democratic governance, human rights, peace and security.
The Pre-Forum can support the AfCFTA Secretariat, Department of Trade and Industry the lead entities for the AU theme of the year, Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, the Office of the Special Envoy on Women and Peace and Security and the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

The AGA-APSA Secretariat will be leading the implementation with the host country – The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with the support from development partners.

L. DOCUMENTATION AND WORKING LANGUAGES

The documentation for the Pre-Forum will be shared electronically. All documents and news updates will be available on www.au.int/aga, @AGA_Platform. #DGTrends used for the meeting.

The Pre-Forum will be conducted in the 4 AU Languages – Arabic, English, French, and Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretations are provided in all 4 languages while documentation will be provided in French and English only.

M. CONTACT DETAILS

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