



## PRESS RELEASE N°120/2011

### AFRICAN UNION HOSTS PAN AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON CELEBRATING COURAGE AND OVERCOMING HARMFUL TRADITIONS

**Addis Ababa, 30 September 2011:** Children and young women especially are often the victims of various forms of physical or psychological violence that infringe on their bodily or physical integrity and mental well-being, due to their perceived and actual inferior status in society and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes. It is against this back drop that the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), will from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, hold a conference under the theme: “*Celebrating Courage and Overcoming Harmful Traditional Practices*”.

Organised by the Department of Social Affairs of the AU Commission, the objective of the conference is to contribute to continental efforts for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls; advocate for the ratification and domestication of the African Union Protocol to the Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Charter on the African Cultural Renaissance; as well as highlight aspects of African culture, customs and traditions which hinder development in general and impede the advancement of women and children in particular among others.

The conference is expected to increased commitments by national structures, regional, continental and international institutions, civil society organizations and development partners to enhance partnerships in efforts to bring an end to harmful traditional practices (HTPs). The meeting will further advocate for strategies and actions to combat HTPs and promote behaviour change, focusing on best practices and success stories.

Participants at the workshop will include African ministers and experts from selected AU Member States, parliamentarians, traditional and religious leaders and representatives of international organisations and civil society organisations.

Worth noting that, harmful traditional practices (HTPs) include female genital mutilation (FGM); early marriage; taboos or practices which prevent women from controlling their

own fertility; nutritional taboos and traditional birth practices; the sacrifice of children for organs to be used in witchcraft; boy preference over girls; female infanticide; early pregnancy; and dowry price. Some HTPs are practiced widely throughout Africa and others only in limited parts of the continent. The result is death, disability, health complications and psychological harm for millions and millions of Africa's children, girls and women.

***Journalists are invited to cover the opening and closing sessions***

Interviews requests should be addressed to Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, Head of Division of Communication, Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission, e-mail: [musabayanaw@africa-union.org](mailto:musabayanaw@africa-union.org) Tel: 0922 406157

**For Further Information consult the AU website: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int)**

***(Attached is the program of the event.)***

## PROGRAMME:

### Pan-African Conference on Celebrating Courage and Overcoming Harmful Traditional Practices, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5-7 October 2011

#### Wednesday, October 5, 2011

09:00-09:30	<b>Arrival and Registration</b>	
09:30-11:00	<b>Opening Session</b>	Moderator: Olawale Maiyegun
11:00-11:30	<b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>	
11:30-13:00	<b>Plenary 1</b> Human Rights and legal protection of women and girls with regards to HTP	Moderator: Presenter:
13:00-15:00	<b>Round table on HTP with representatives from Africa , Asia and Europe</b>	
15:00-17:00	<b>Plenary 2</b> Positive and negative cultural practices and Traditions	Moderator: Presenter:
17:00-17:30	Summary of Conclusions	Moderator:
18:00	<b>Welcoming Reception and Dinner</b>	

#### Thursday, October 6, 2011

09:00-11:00	<b>Plenary 3</b> Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	Moderator: Presenter:
11:00-11:15	<b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>	
11:15-13:00	<b>Plenary 4</b> Case Studies: Presentation of Best-Practice Study	Moderator: Presenter: consultant
13:00-15:00	<b>Lunch</b>	
15:00-16:45	<b>Plenary 4</b> Continued with presentations	Moderator: Assefa Beqele

	of country/ agency experiences	3 Presenters:
16:45-17:00	<b>Tea/Coffee Break</b>	
17:00-17:30	Summary of Conclusions	Presenter: DSA
18:00	<b>Dinner</b>	

**Friday, October 7, 2011**

09:00-14:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Tour of the City and Sightseeing including Lunch</li> <li>b) Finalisation of draft outcome document</li> </ul>	
14:00-16:00	<p><b>Plenary 5</b></p> <p>Adoption of outcome Documents</p>	<p>Moderator: Director Social Affairs</p> <p>Presenter: Rapporteur</p>
16:00-17:00	<b>Closing Session</b>	