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

THEME:

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DELIVERING THE PEACE DIVIDENDS THROUGH AfCFTA IMPLEMENTATION

NARRATIVE REPORT

4 OCTOBER 2023
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
I. INTRODUCTION

1. The African Governance Platform (AGP) organized the 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.” 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 overall goal of the Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th HLD was 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.

2. The sub-themes discussed during the pre-forum centred on enhancing the empowerment of African women in democratic governance and socioeconomic advancement, implementing the AfCFTA with a Gender-Inclusive approach for peaceful prosperity and pathways to acknowledging the voices of Women in trade, unleashing the potential of trade for achieving peace dividends.

3. This narrative report captures the proceedings of the Gender Pre-forum. These included moderated opening and closing session, panel discussions on the three (3) sub-themes of the pre-forum, question, and answer sessions where participants shared their views on the various session themes, and Africa Talks.

II. ATTENDANCE

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

III. OPENING CEREMONY

Ms. Makda Tessema from the AGA-APSA Secretariat welcomed delegates to the Gender-Preforum to the 12th High Level Dialogue on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights taking place under the theme “The role of African women in delivering peace dividends through the AfCFTA implementation”. She invited Ms. Patience Chiradza, Director, GCPD, PAPS for her goodwill statement.

Ms. Patience Chiradza, Director, GCPD, PAPS welcomed delegates to the Gender Preforum on behalf of H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. She began her intervention by expressing appreciation to the Government and the people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and more specifically H.E. Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs, represented by H.E. Madam Alemitu Umut, State Minister for Women and Children’s Affairs, for taking time off her busy schedule to grace delegates with her presence.

Ms. Patience Chiradza observed that the creation of a sustainable and prosperous future for African women remains a critical endeavor due to the demographic strength of women. She therefore called on stakeholders to guarantee that adequate investments are made to enable women to realize their potential role in building sustainable development on the continent. Young women, she affirmed, possess requisite creativity and innovation which are key to ensuring the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) but this can only be possible when African women are capacitated.

She noted that women’s voices and perspectives are important to the African Union. Through hearing young women’s perspectives, she added, we will get to listen, act in their
best interest and jointly work with women to identify key roles and facilitate their meaningful participation and inclusion in democratic governance, peace and security.

Ms. Patience Chiradza further highlighted that although inclusion is key in providing an enabling environment for AfCFTA implementation, women must also play their part for constructive engagement by developing and sharpening their skills through training to take advantage of opportunities that will be brought forth by the continental free trade agreement.

She stressed the role of all stakeholders in ensuring peace, security on the continent and to pave the way for the implementation of the AfCFTA and encouraged delegates to network, learn from each other and most importantly proffer solutions that can be provided in the outcome document.

In conclusion, she expressed profound gratitude to the African Governance Platform, the AGA-APSA Secretariat, stakeholders and partners, namely ISS, International-IDEA, UN-OHCHR, Training for Peace and Expertise France that have come together to make this event a success.

The goodwill statement from Ms. Patience Chiradza was followed by the opening remarks of H.E Alemitu Umit, State Minister For Women And Children Affairs Of The Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia

On behalf of Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, Minister of Women and Social Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, H.E Alemitu Umit conveyed her appreciation and highest consideration to the African Union for organizing the Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th HLD, at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. She expressed her pride and honour to be with delegates in her capacity as State Minister for Women and Children Affairs to analyse the crucial role that women play in socio-economic development, peace, and security.

She acknowledged women as the pillar of African society, adding that women have been trading and crossing borders before legal frameworks for cross-border trade were
created. As such, women’s informal cross-border trading has been pivotal in tackling unemployment, and poverty, and has contributed to food security.

H.E Alemitu Umut noted that peace is essential for trade, and specifically, for cross-border trading, therefore, the achievements made so far by women in trade have proven to be crucial for community cohesion, sustainable peace, and stability, therefore, She emphasized the need to provide a free and open space for women to share their experiences and help the way forward for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA throughout the conversations.

Furthermore, she opined that in the African Continent, women are above half of the African population and key players in the continent’s democratic governance and socioeconomic development. However, during times of conflict, women bear the burden as victims. Additionally, women are often confined and challenged by cultural, systemic, and structural disadvantages, affecting their participation in leadership and decision-making processes.

Speaking on the AfCFTA, she remarked that it was envisioned to be a platform for the movement of goods, services, and people among the AU Member States, and has the goal of creating job opportunities, facilitating trade, and strengthening sustainable development in Africa. She added that although the Agreement marked a shift in integration, the AfCFTA’s success is interlinked and based on several factors—one of them being women’s meaningful participation and the need to have an enabling environment for trade to happen across borders.

The AfCFTA, she continued, is crucial to the average African citizen, and given the past and ongoing contributions that women have given to informal trade, women are key players in the implementation of the AfCFTA. She stressed that women can use this opportunity to improve the livelihoods of their communities, be a vehicle for peace, equality and sustainable development of our continent. In conclusion, she urged delegates to have open discussions while focusing on solutions.
SESSION 1: STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Session Objectives: This session focused on the role of women historically as contributors to democratic governance and socio-economic development.

Moderator: Ms. Mpho Motsamai, Human Rights Lawyer, Women’s Law Clinic

Panelists:
- Ms. Liz Guantai, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- Ms. Harime Sylvia RANDRIANARIVO, Director of AfYWL-Madagascar
- Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah, Head Africa Peace and Security Governance Programme, Institute for Security Studies

The moderator, Ms. Mpho Motsami welcomed panelists to the discussion on strengthening the role of African women in democratic governance and socioeconomic development. She addressed the first question to Ms. Liz Guantai by asking her about the contribution of women in the economy of the continent.

Ms. Liz Guantai, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) noted that the role of women has evolved over time, as the traditional gender roles are changing. Women, she explained, have been participating in cross-border trade but this role was considered as a gender role. She also expressed hope about the positive evolution of women’s political rights to the point that women have begun to hold political office as is the case in Tanzania where the president is a woman.

She went on to add that women play a key role in farming, as agriculture is a high source of economic empowerment and women occupy these spaces. Despite this fact, she stressed, there is still the question of how we can ensure that these roles be appreciated from an economically equitable perspective. According to her, women still face systemic discrimination due to gender prohibitive roles. Furthermore, cross-border women traders...
are unable to grow to become exporters or recipients of loans and land ownership remains difficult to achieve for women.

**Ms. Harime Sylvia RANDRIANARIVO, Director of AfYWL-Madagascar** shared her views on women’s participation in governance. She began by sharing the example of Madagascar. She explained that Madagascar is still a very patriarchal society and little has been said about the role of queens in the country. Queens have safeguarded religion, spearheaded protection of handicapped persons and the protection of rights.

She identified some challenges that impact on women’s participation in governance in Madagascar as culture and mentality, since it is considered shameful to be led by women. As such, many women struggle with the imposter syndrome and do not feel confident enough to take the reins of leadership. She called for a change in the society to promote women’s participation in governance.

**Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah, Head Africa Peace and Security Governance Programme, Institute for Security Studies** spoke mainly about the role women play in peace. He noted that the AU and Africa in general is searching for a peaceful environment, and added that democratic governance is essential to development. According to him, women’s role in achieving these objectives is essential.

Women, he explained, are pillars of conflict prevention and resolution (as demonstrated in the Liberia, Sierra Leone and Accra processes). Women are also champions of grassroots development which is a dividend of the governance space. As such, women’s inclusion role in politics is a measure of the maturity of a country’s development. He noted that African women are innovators and can incubate businesses, which speaks to their role in building economic systems.

With regards to UCGs, he remarked that coups show that governance is facing challenges. When coups happen it's a matter of survival and women are often outliers
who are hardly considered. Second, the inclusion of women in this is dependent on the transition plans in place.

**Plenary Discussions**

A key point that emerged during the plenary discussions was the need to relook and rethink the role of women, acknowledging that their role goes far beyond just legislation. Women have a significant number of roles in society that are ignored because these roles are mostly demonstrated with informal spaces. For instance, women usually lead when it comes to mobilisation and campaigns during electoral periods.

A delegate took the floor and explained that most often, the concept of African women being naturally “strong” is used as a cover to allow for all kinds of violations against women. She was of the view that such thinking must be done away with, as women are also human beings and their human rights need to be protected.

Dr. Andrews Atta-Asamoah concluded the plenary discussions by noting that tradition and culture still impact on the ways in which women are able to participate in governance spaces. He explained that we cannot discuss inclusion without addressing the sociological nature of inclusion. According to him, there is a need to re-engineer the culture and the mindset of Africans, otherwise the next generations will still grapple with such challenges. He called for intentional and deliberate policy measures by Member States to tackle this issue.

**SESSION 2: GENDER RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA TO ENSURE PEACE DIVIDENDS**

**Session Objectives:** This session focused 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.
Moderator: Mr. Emanuuel K. Bensah, Deputy Executive Director, AfCFTA Policy Network

Panelists:
- Mr. Komi Tsowu, AFCFTA Lead, RSCA, UNDP
- Ms. Pauline Kahuubire, Programme Director, Women’s International Peace Centre
- Ms. Jihane Cherif, Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women in Peace and Security
- Mr. William Simwanza, ETTIM, AUC

Mr. Komi Tsowu, AFCFTA Lead, RSCA, UNDP began his intervention by explaining that there are clear linkages between creating an African market, integrating markets and promoting peace. In his view, without peace in cross-border areas, there can be no trade. He informed delegates that the UNDP supports AfCFTA processes.

The AfCTA, he stated, is significant in several respects. First, it is the first time that a trade agenda has a dedicated protocol for women and youth, in view of their role in promoting trade. Second, he noted that the AfCFTA goes beyond a trade agreement as it seeks to ensure the integration of the continent as a way to produce what we consume and the role of women cannot be underestimated in this regard. According to him, the key question that must be addressed is how to help women entrepreneurs to create value.

He informed delegates that the UNDP has worked with UN Women and the AfCFTA secretariat and held consultations in more than 26 countries to understand the specific challenges of women. Some of these challenges include:
- The challenges of access to information for women entrepreneurs, as most do not have information about potential markets and are therefore unable to reach wider markets;
- Difficulties with access to productive capacities and financial resources;
- Access to land titles remains a key issue on the continent, especially for women;
- Significant gaps with regards to infrastructure at the borders;
- Limited participation of women in networks as many women entrepreneurs
prefer to work on their own rather than being part of a network.

He concluded by stressing the need to secure markets for women through the use of affirmative actions. He gave the example of Kenya where the government initiated the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) in 2013 by a directive from President Uhuru Kenyatta. He explained that the AGPO is an affirmative action that seeks to empower women, youth and persons with a disability through public procurement business opportunities by giving these groups 30 percent of all procurement initiatives without competition from established firms.

On her part, Ms. Pauline Kahuubire, Programme Director, Women’s International Peace Centre emphasized that in conflict situations, trade is lower due to mistrust and insecurity among communities. The AfCFTA is therefore a peace-building tool that requires special attention. She, however, called for a paradigm shift in the design of trade policies, as in her view, most trade policies consider women as a homogenous group, whereas women are heterogeneous. She stressed that women have different backgrounds and are dealing with different challenges. As such, there is a need to engage with women through human rights-based approaches and analyse the impact of approaches for cross-border trade.

Ms. Pauline listed some challenges with regards to trade policies as follows:

- Limited data on the gender-specific impact of AfCFTA in conflict settings, which makes it challenging to know whether the Agreement is achieving its objectives;
- Technical language used in the development of trade policies which makes understanding challenging for the masses;
- The low involvement of women in developing these policies, whereas women are the key targets of the policies.

Ms. Pauline also noted that implementation of the AfCFTA could be difficult in view of the lack of institutional capacities and slow integration of regional policies into national policies.
Ms. Jihane Cherif, Office of the AU Special Envoy on Women in Peace and Security informed delegates that the Office of the Special Envoy on Peace and Security took part in the AfCFTA Youth Symposium held in September 2023 in Lusaka. She described the AfCFTA as a game changer and stressed the need to grasp the opportunity for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In her view, issues such as high taxes, security issues and corruption at the borders are challenges for women in trade in Africa. She urged Member States to take ownership of AfCFTA and develop frameworks to protect women. She identified the following gender responsive actions, which could be taken by RECs and the African Union:

- Access to Information to enable women to know about the AfCFTA, use it efficiently and teach others. This could be achieved through awareness campaigns, training and mentorship platforms;
- Access to technology and online markets;
- Access to finance given that countries need gender-sensitive approaches to ensure women’s access to credit and investment.

Mr. William Simwanza, ETTIM, AUC focused his intervention on industrialisation. He informed delegates that the AU Department of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade, Industry, Mining (ETTIM) ensures that the integrated market of AfCFTA has products from the continent. He emphasized that peace is key to production.

He remarked that Agenda 2063 is a key framework in the programming of the ETTIM, projects and programmes are aligned to its aspirations, most notably Aspiration 1. He added that the realisation of Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 requires that women play their role through value addition of products. He deplored the fact that Women’s participation in industrialisation is low.

He revealed that according to the African Trade Observatory, women’s participation in industrialization could increase the GDP of African countries by 12 percent. Many women
entrepreneurs in the processing sector, he explained, fail to expand beyond the start-up phase due to systemic challenges but also technical skills, unfavourable policies and structural barriers. He remarked that if these challenges are addressed, jobs will be created for women and youth.

He further added that ETTIM has undertaken initiatives to ensure that the supply side of the AfCFTA is strengthened and that women take their rightful role. Some of these efforts include The African Women in Processing (AWIP) initiative which is aligned to the SDGs and agenda 2063, to create an enabling environment to allow women supply the market with processed products.

He concluded by emphasising that women’s economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth. He called for the empowerment of women to enable them to play their role in social and economic development and urged the AUC and various stakeholders to improve women’s access to finance and markets.

**Plenary Discussions**

During the plenary discussion, regional organs and the AU were called upon to take cross-border issues seriously by supporting the existing cross-border structures and committees and ensuring that women are supported.

A delegate raised a question about the impact of Covid 19 on women-owned businesses and initiatives taken by the African Union to address these. A panellist responded that the African Union put in place several measures to keep businesses afloat during the COVID-19 containment efforts. Such measures have included the introduction of actions to ensure liquidity for businesses to tackle immediate cashflow challenges and to support business continuity; subsidizing publicly provided inputs, temporary debt relief and compensation through special credit lines and guarantees; deferral of financial obligations and, where possible, revisiting the conditions for firms to file for bankruptcy.
SESSION 3: LISTENING TO WOMEN IN TRADING: CAN TRADE CONTRIBUTE TO REALISING AFRICA’S PEACE DIVIDEND?

Discussions in this thematic session focused 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 who have been trading before trade agreements.

Moderator: Ms. Valentine Atonde, Senior Programme Officer APSA

The panellists for the session were the following:

- Ms. Tendaliishe Chitima, Creative Industries
- Ms. Lynn Musonda, CEO Savannah Chocolate
- Amb. Ayoola Lawrence Olukanni, Pathways Business and Sustainable Development Consulting Services
- Ms Ruth Negash, Chief Executive Officer, Africa Women in Trade

Ms. Chitima commenced her address by sharing a personal story that highlighted the strength and hard work embodied by her mother. She recounted her mother’s early departure from home to actively participate in the liberation movement of Zimbabwe as a young girl, illustrating how women have historically transcended social constraints. Furthermore, Ms. Chitima went on to describe how during Zimbabwe’s hyperinflation era, women in her neighbourhood engaged in cross-border trade to import essential goods, ensuring their community had access to necessities. These anecdotes served to emphasize the courage of women and challenge the notion that their roles are limited to domestic spaces, illustrating their active presence on the forefront of various endeavours.

Additionally, Ms Chitima noted that within the informal sector, women are usually unable to scale up their businesses, which limits the earning capacity of women involved in this space.
Ms. Musonda, CEO of Savannah Chocolate shared the various business challenges her company faces, such as the inefficiencies in transportation networks and the disparities in business practices among different countries on the continent. She emphasized that these discrepancies create complexities in conducting business, as inconsistent documentation can result in delays and the spoilage of goods during transit.

Despite this, she stressed that a key starting point in benefiting from the AfCFTA tool is being a registered business. She highlighted that due to being a formal company, she had managed to receive support from the government in equipment, enabling her to produce 1000 bars of chocolate within an 8-hour period.

Amb. Olukani furthered the discussion on business practices by emphasizing the significance of the certificate of origin within the AfCFTA framework, as it grants traders access to the advantages offered by the AfCFTA tool. On the business landscape, the Amb. Olukani emphasized that Regional Economic Communities must undergo capacity building to enhance their ability to provide comprehensive support to businesses. Additionally, he underscored the significance of business registration, noting that it serves as an obligatory prerequisite when traders intend to engage in business transactions with the government.

Ms. Negash supplemented Ms. Chitima’s submission, emphasizing that during political campaigns and the lead-up to elections, women play a pivotal role in mobilization efforts, effectively rallying significant numbers of voters. This underscored the undeniable influence of women in grassroots processes. Ms. Negash went on to explain that her organization “The African Women in Trade” served as a bridge, offering platforms for women to engage with the government in addition to its primary purpose of having been formed to enable women and youth to trade during the pandemic.

Ms. Negash added that her platform also served to grant young women the opportunity to gain insights into how existing trade policies can be harnessed to benefit young women
and the youth. She reiterated that the youth need to bring solutions and not to have a dependency on looking for jobs.

When asked about the specific problems that emerge in trade, Amb. Olukani cited corruption within the customs systems, including challenges with immigration and visa processes. He added that there is a disjuncture in the way policies are formulated and how they are implemented. He underscored the need for policy fluidity from the practitioners to those in practice.

Ms. Musonda cited challenges she encounters in trade as communication, corruption and friction in payment systems. She highlighted that within the cross-border business, it was not unusual to be asked for bribes compounded by the fact of being a woman. She stressed that through being a woman, it becomes an unspoken assumption that one would be a pushover and accept to participate in corruption. On frictions in payments, Ms. Musonda stated that the currency challenge in Africa is a real barrier as the generally accepted currency is the dollar. This necessitates the need to change local currency into foreign currency, which reduces the value with each conversion before the purchase of raw materials.

Ms. Musonda also mentioned that the political environment significantly influences the business sector. She pointed out that during election periods, there is a sense of unease when it comes to conducting business, primarily because of the expected challenges associated with elections in the region. As such, they are compelled to analyse the electoral periods of countries before proceeding to do business in those countries.

Ms Chitima concluded her remarks by stating that policies need to be adapted into a language and format that the people can understand. In the same vein, she noted that her generation of women was disproving the concept of “strong black woman” and trading it for functional systems where one does not need to have a trade-off to navigate the socio-political landscape.

**Plenary Discussions**
In the plenary session, a question was raised about the focus of the work of Regional Economic Communities. It was mentioned that COMESA’s primary focus includes enhancing capacity, aligning trade policies for seamless transactions across the continent, and optimizing the value chains within the business community.

Another question had to do with how women should leverage e-commerce platforms for business. The solution provided was the need to educate women, including upskilling them with the technical competencies to navigate the digital spaces. It was emphasized that women in the informal sector need even more support to be able to use e-commerce platforms.

Additionally, it was suggested that business objectives ought to be aligned with Agenda 2063, thus harnessing the synergies in policies and objectives.

**Africa Talks**

In Session 4, titled “Africa Talks,” Ms. Yevi Madurai, the Founder of Africa Prosperity Fund, had a conversation with Ms. Tsion Bahru, a young Ethiopian entrepreneur. They discussed various business conditions in Africa and the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

**Ms. Yevi Madurai:** How can we promote inclusivity?

**Ms. Tsion Bahru:** Inclusivity should start from the language used in the development of policies. Lower tariffs and other related concepts are not easy to put into practice when a person is not educated on these concepts. The push for inclusivity extends to acknowledging the challenge of non-technical inclusion in Africa. This often entails collaborating with older men who traditionally have not taken the youth seriously, particularly when the individual was a young woman.

**Ms. Yevi Madurai:** What do you envision for the benefits from the AfCFTA?
**Ms. Tsion Bahru:** In terms of the benefits of the AfCFTA, I can mention capital acquisition, collaborations, and grants. This is easier said than done, but through the AfCFTA, these might become more accessible. Within Ethiopia, the market is slowly opening up. For instance, we now have Safaricom and MPESA operating in the country.

**Ms. Yevi Madurai:** What is the strategy for expanding into other countries? Which countries are you targeting?

**Ms. Tsion Bahru:** I am targeting Tanzania and Kenya, since East Africa would be an easier starting point. I am hoping to set up manufacturing plants in these countries to make deliveries easier and have a more significant impact.

**Ms. Yevi Madurai:** What challenges would you face in a world without the AfCFTA?

**Ms. Tsion Bahru:** Navigating bureaucratic obstacles could pose a considerable challenge, particularly when perceived as an outsider in foreign lands. Nevertheless, thanks to the AfCFTA, the procedure would be more streamlined.

**Ms. Yevi Madurai:** Is your business scaling successfully?

**Ms. Tsion Bahru:** The reusable pads have more scalability potential compared to fashion items. Most of the fashion items are not generic pieces, making it a niche market. Our main client base is in East Africa, with a specific focus on Kenya and Tanzania. Currently, we are grappling with a significant obstacle in the e-commerce sector, particularly high delivery charges, and we may have to consider establishing a warehouse in the near future in those countries to alleviate shipping costs.

One of the valuable advantages that businesses can derive from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a substantial reduction in tariffs, ultimately resulting in a considerable boost in profits. Furthermore, leveraging platforms like Fashonomics provides access to valuable business networks and promising opportunities.
Presentation of Outcome Statement

The outcome statement of the Gender Pre-forum was presented by Ms. Ady Namaran Coulibaly, a rapporteur of the forum.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Ms Patience Chiradza Director GCPD, PAPS took the floor to share a vote of thanks for the Gender Pre-forum. Ms. Chiradza took the opportunity to reiterate her commitment including that of her office towards the outcomes of the gender pre-forum. She highlighted that in line with enhancing the participation of women, PAPS would launch the Women in Transitional Justice programme in line with the Youth in Transitional Justice programme.

On bolstering the participation of women, particularly young women, Ms Chiradza announced that there would be a youth election observer training to ensure that youth and women in particular are a central part of the work of the African Union and that this would be done by the end of the year.

Amb Samuel Dabeng, Savannah Center, shared a closing statement. He expressed gratitude to the African Governance Architecture and all stakeholders for the successful organisation of the Gender Preform. He emphasized the vital necessity of addressing inclusion-related factors for women, with a specific focus on the demilitarization of borders. In the context of the AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area), these borders should ideally serve as facilitators for the seamless movement of goods and services.

Amb. Samuel Dabeng remarked that the militarization of borders poses a significant threat, especially to female traders. He underscored the fact that women’s position in society should not elicit pity but, rather, women should be elevated because they are essential partners in the process of development. Amb. Dabeng also called for policies to be inclusive and expressed in a language that is readily comprehensible to the majority of people.
He thanked all delegates and dignitaries for their role in the success of the Gender Pre-forum and declared The Gender Pre-Forum to the 12th High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights duly closed.