



Communiqué of the Constitutive Meeting of the Core Group for the Operationalization of the Gender Cluster, 17-18 October 2015, Nairobi, Kenya

Introduction

The ECOSOCC Women and Gender Cluster held its Constitutive Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-18 October 2015. The main purpose of the meeting was to establish the framework for operationalizing the cluster in pursuance of the provisions of Article 11 of the ECOSOCC Statutes that assigned priority to Sectoral Clusters as the main operational mechanisms of the organ and the consequent decisions of the executive Organs of the 2nd Permanent General Assembly of ECOSOCC to ensure the practical realization of this cardinal objective.

Official Opening

The opening session began with four main statements and addresses. The Chairperson of the ECOSOCC Women and Gender Cluster, Ms. Fatma Mehdi began by welcoming all members and participants. She thanked everyone for honoring her invitation and highlighted the main purpose and objectives of the meeting. She observed that the program was crowded but expressed confidence in the ability of members of the Cluster to fully address its needs and requirements. Subsequently, the ECOSOCC Presiding Officer, Mr. Joseph Chilengi and the Director of CIDO and Head of ECOSOCC Secretariat, Dr Jinmi Adisa underlined the historic significance of the meeting. They noted that this was the first time in eleven years since ECOSOCC was established that clusters were being operationalized even though the Statutes had assigned this function as an overriding priority. Both speakers then offered advice and suggestions on how the Cluster could best achieve its aims and objectives. They stressed the relative autonomy of cluster operations as long as it served the objective purpose of the organ and remained intimately linked with constituencies in both the African civil society community and the greater family of the African Union. Finally, the Special Guest of the occasion, HE Mr. Bah El-Mehdi, the Ambassador of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) underscored the importance that AU Member States attached to the ECOSOCC agenda. He urged the cluster to work constructively and produce meaningful results that will foster development and emancipation of the African people.

Discussions

The meeting then continued in working sessions over a two day period. The discussions produced a roadmap involving the elaboration of the mandate of the cluster, its priorities, structure and framework of membership, financing, partnership and communication support requirements etc.

Outcomes, Decisions and Recommendations

The core cluster committee, deliberated on the various issues in the agenda and work plan in a two days meeting. It concluded with the following decisions and recommendations:

A. On the Mandate of the cluster:

As per Article 11 of the of the Statutes of the ECOSOCC of the African Union on the Sectoral Custer Committees and specifically Article 11 (I) on Women and Gender the cluster decides to expand the scope of work as per the mandate of Women and Gender to read as follows: **Women and Gender:** (Women; Climate Change; Arts; Trade, Research and Development; Integration, Food Security; Education; Health; Peace and Security; Cultural, Economic and Financial inclusion; and all other issues where Gender and development is a cross-cutting issue)

B. On the Structure of the Cluster:

- i. The Working Group will be composed of all female members of the ECOSOCC General Assembly and committed male members.
- ii. The cluster will establish a Coordinating Team. The Coordination team will be composed of the following: (a) One (1) Cluster Chairperson; (b) One (1) Secretary of the Cluster; (c) One (1) Communication Focal Point; (d) One (1) Research Focal Point; (e) One (1) Liaison for the Gender Department; (f) One (1) Regional Coordinator representative from each of the five regions; (g) One (1) nominated representative from Pan African Parliament (PAP), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and African Commission on Human and People Rights (ACHPR)
- iii. The cluster will also form Regional Groups in each of the 5 AU regions under the Regional Coordinators whose responsibility is to liaise with appropriate CSOs networks in the areas.
- iv. The cluster has the right to Invite Experts whenever need arises and on the burning theme of the Year or period

C. On the Frequency of Meetings:

- i. The cluster shall hold a general meeting no less than once a year to plan and review and discuss matters arising
- ii. Extraordinary meetings shall be held to revise or make decisions in matters which are deemed urgent

D. On the Functions of the cluster:

- i. Mobilize and undertake missions when necessary to advance the agenda of women as per the mandate above.

- ii. Ensure that Women and Men are targeted in both urban and rural areas
- iii. Dedicate one flagship project to address the Women and gender motif of the year
- iv. Embark on ways to ensure transformative power structures through innovative means
- v. Resort to innovative ways to address gender stereo types
- vi. Lend particular attention to entrepreneurship as mean for strengthening and empowering of women financially, politically and economically
- vii. Liaise closely with different ECOSOCC Clusters Committees to advance Women and Gender agenda

E. On Advisory Opinions and Research:

- i. Advisory opinions shall be issued on matters pertaining to the mandate of women and gender
- ii. The opinions shall be issued in accordance with the Statutes of ECOSOCC and its rules of procedure
- iii. At least one advisory opinion and report shall be issued annually to review the achievements and challenges of women as per the AU theme of the year
- iv. A focal point(s) of the core cluster will be selected and tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the impact of the AU theme of the AU on Women and Gender
- v. All reports and advisory opinions should provide a balanced opinion of both practitioners and researchers

F. On global Observance days:

- i. Commemoration of global days such as 08 March as Women's day, Africa Union day, 24 Novemberetc. shall be observed by the Cluster.
- ii. Commemorations shall be celebrated by issuing a statement and conduct region-wise activities
- iii. Activities may vary to address the pertinent issues in each region

G. On the Annual Women and Gender Pre-summit:

- i. Organize annual pre-summit for women in collaboration with relevant clusters, departments, organs of the union and any other relevant actors.
- ii. Ensure that youth and particularly young women are a part of the pre-summit
- iii. Ensure that men too are included. This shall include young men and committed men.
- iv. Selection should ensure that grass-roots are targeted and that the female male ratio for participation should be set at 60:40 ratio

H. On the Work plan:

The cluster has adopted a work plan with activities for the time period of November 2015 –December 2016. (Enclosed)

I. On Communications:

- i. Utilize the website of ECOSOCC and particularly the Women and Gender as the main tool for communication
- ii. Embark on the use of social media as a platform for outreach
- iii. Popularize Agenda 2063 and the SDGs through the use of the different communications channels.

J. On Partnerships:

- i. The cluster should strengthen linkages within ECOSCC through the clusters for purposes of complementarity and effectiveness
- ii. Establish and/or enhance cooperation with the relevant AUC departments and AU Organs, such as the Women and Gender Directorate
- iii. Establish and/r enhance cooperation with the African and International Institutions and Actors
- iv. Utilize the existing platforms at the national and regional levels including the ECOSOCC national chapter, Regional Economic Communities.
- v. Expand partnerships with the wider African Civil Society Networks

K. On Financing:

- i. The cluster shall explore opportunities for cooperation and mobilizing resources with relevant actors
- ii. Ensure that such cooperation is in accordance with the Statutes of the ECOSOCC of the AU.