FOURTH SESSION OF THE AU CONFERENCE
OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CAMSD4)
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
26-30 MAY 2014

THEME: “Strengthening the African Family for Inclusive Development in Africa”

CONCEPT NOTE
I. BACKGROUND

1. The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) in its Articles 14 to 16 established the Specialised Technical Committees (STCs), as an important technical organ of the Union. The STCs were originally established under Article 25 of the African Economic Community Treaty (the Abuja Treaty) and with the transformation of the OAU into the AU, the STCs were carried over by the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The STCs are expected to work in close collaboration with the various Department s of the Commission to facilitate well-informed inputs in their areas of specialisation to the work of the Executive Council. They should also, be involved in monitoring programme development and implementation by the AU and RECs on behalf of the Executive Council.

2. The Assembly through Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII) adopted in February 2009, reconfigured the STCs. According to the reconfiguration, the Conference of Ministers of Social Development will be part of the STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment. The other component of the STC is the Labour and Social Affairs Commission (LASC). The operationalization of the STCs was to have commenced in 2013 but the Executive Council in its Decision EX.CL/Dec.701(XXI) deferred the commencement till January 2014.

3. Thus the upcoming Fourth Session will be the last Conference of sectorial Ministers of Social Development. In April 2015, when the 10th Ordinary Session of the LSAC would have been held, Ministers of Labour and social partners will meet alongside the Ministers of Social Development as the STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment.

Fourth Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development

4. In January 2013, the AU Executive Council, in its Decision EX.CL/Dec.750 (XXII), adopted the African Common Position in Preparation for the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014. Subsequently, the upcoming 4th Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development, 26-30 May 2014, will have the strengthening of the family as an over-arching theme.

5. The family is the fundamental unit of society and has multiple roles and functions, especially in Africa where it has been central, unique and indispensable. However, it is challenged and disintegrating in the face of many socio-economic changes, including the erosion of traditional patterns of existence and the enormous changes through migration, conflict, climate change and diseases, especially HIV and AIDS. The reality is a changing pattern of the family in Africa,
as the continent is witnessing increase in female-headed (sometimes grandmothers), single-parent and even child-headed households.

6. It is recognized that there has been a missing link, or absence of emphasis on the role of the family, and the need for it to be strengthened for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The achievement of the MDGs depend to a significant extent on how the family has been empowered to fulfill its primary functions. Poverty eradication, full employment, decent work and social integration should be at the centre of programmes aimed at strengthening the family. Africa is enjoying unprecedented economic growth but its benefits do not reach the poorest and most marginalized families, as there has been no noticeable decline in family poverty. Direct interventions are required to benefit poor families and marginalized groups. Family oriented policies that target the family as a unit and its dynamics as a whole, rather than sole focus on individuals, produces better outcomes and facilitates inclusive development.

7. One of such family-oriented policies is social protection systems. Social protection aims to reduce social and economic risk and vulnerability. It has multiple beneficial economic impacts, build human capital, breaks the intergenerational poverty cycle and reduces growing inequalities. Creating and strengthening social protection systems is an important priority for the African Union, particularly, protection to offer relief from economic and social deprivation including eliminating chronic and extreme poverty, humanitarian relief in emergencies, and cash transfer schemes, among others.

8. For generations family has been a source of strength for its members, providing them with a sophisticated social security system, as well as support and guidance mechanisms especially in times of need and crisis such as during unemployment, sickness, bereavement, and old age. The family has also been a key source of childcare, child socialisation and reciprocal care-giving relations between younger and older family members.

9. The upcoming CAMSD4 provides the opportunity to examine in all its ramifications how to strengthen the family and also a chance to interrogate and discuss in detail two critical family-oriented policies and instruments – children and social protection systems; and a draft protocol on the rights and welfare of older persons. These two issues are germane to advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within the family.

10. Thus, as the protection and promotion of women, children, the youth and older persons which is the core function of the family, are top priorities in the Post 2015 Development Agenda, adding families to these priorities, would be a major step forward in the direction of empowerment and reduction of inequality and
contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals. The same argument applies to the African Union Agenda 2063, and for the inclusion of the family in its Framework Document.

II. MAIN OBJECTIVES

11. The main objectives are:

(i) How to improve family well-being through the implementation of effective continental and national policies, strategies and programmes to strengthen the capacity of the African family to address the needs of all its members.

(ii) Define an agenda that will set the foundations for scaling up and sustaining national integrated systems of social protection for children as part of the post-2015 development framework in Africa.

(iii) To validate the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

12. The expected outcomes of the Conference are the following:

i. Identification of effective policies, strategies and programmes that strengthen the family;

ii. A draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the implementation of the AU Plan of Action on the Family;


iv. A draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the implementation of the Continental Plan of Action on the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019);

v. Agenda for scaling up of social protection for children.

IV. FORMAT OF THE MEETING

13. The meeting will be organized in two phases:

a. Experts Meeting: 26-28 May 2014

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1 Report of the UN Secretary General on the Preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014, United Nations, December 2013, p 15
During the first two days of the Conference, experts/officials from Member States will consider relevant documents and make appropriate recommendations for the Ministers’ consideration and approval.

The Experts’ Meeting will be preceded by an AU Expert Consultation on Social Protection in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 and 30 April 2014. Two (2) participants from Member States, from the Ministry of Social Development/ or those responsible for Children, as well as from Finance and Development Planning, respectively, will be invited and sponsored by South Africa and Partners.

b. **Ministers Meeting: 29-30 May 2014**

The Ministers will take decisions on the way forward after considering the agenda items listed hereunder concerning the African Family, older persons, persons with disabilities, children and promotion of social policy and social protection interventions.

During the Ministerial segment, there will be a High-level Ministerial Dialogue on Social Protection for Children.

V. **AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION**

14. The Conference will consider the following key items:

i. Thematic Paper: "**Strengthening the African Family for Inclusive Development in Africa**"

ii. Children and Social Protection Systems: Building the African Agenda

iii. The Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa;

iv. Report of the 1st Meeting of the Committee of Seven (7) on Liquidation of the Assets of/ on the Replacement Structure for the African Rehabilitation Centre (ARI);

v. Report on the Dissolution of the African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI);


VI. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE WILL BE THE FOLLOWING:

15. Documents:

i. The Social Policy Framework for Africa;
ii. Plan of Action on the Family in Africa;
iii. The African Common Position in preparation for the 20\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2014.
iv. The African Union Disability Architecture;
v. The Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing;
vi. The Draft Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons;
vii. Concept Note for an Expert Meeting and Ministerial Dialogue on Social Protection at the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development;

16. The Concept Note, Agendas, Work Programmes, and documents to be considered at the Conference will be posted on the AU Website (www.africa-union.org) and other relevant documentation will be circulated during the Conference.

VII. PARTICIPANTS

17. It is expected that the 4\textsuperscript{th} Session of AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development will bring together: Ministers responsible for Social Development and Experts/Officials from AU Member States, the RECs, the AU Commission and AU Organs, UN Agencies, Development Partners, International, Regional and National Organizations, including CSO’s dealing with social development issues, Independent Experts and Resource Persons, and Special Guests.

18. It is recommended that Delegations of Member States for the CAMSD4 should include legal advisors as there will be extensive discussions on the Draft Protocols on the Rights of Older Persons and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, respectively, of which the one on Older Persons had been approved by the African Commission on People and Human Rights, and validated by stakeholders, after which it will be considered by the CAMSD4 and by the AU Ministers of Justice before final adoption by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Governments. Both drafts will be circulated to Member States ahead of the CAMSD4.
VIII. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

19. The AUC will be responsible for the invitations to Member States and the preparations of all related documents. Translation and interpretation services, and secretarial support, will be availed by the AUC.

IX. BUDGET AND OTHER RESOURCES

20. While the AU Commission will contribute the amount earmarked in the budget for convening of the Conference, financial and technical support may be provided by Member States and partner organizations to facilitate the preparation of documents and participation of representatives from CSOs, independent experts and resource persons.

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