FOURTH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION
CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
26-30 MAY 2014

THEME: "Strengthening the African Family for Inclusive Development in Africa"


I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development (CAMSD2) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 26-30 November 2012. The Conference was convened in implementation of Decision EX.CL/Dec.625 (XVIII) adopted by the 18th Session of the AU Executive Council and Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2011. The mandate of the Ministers for Social Development falls within the purview of the principles of the AU Constitutive Act, namely, to promote sustainable development and raise the living standards of the African peoples.

2. The theme of the Conference was, “Promoting the Rights and Welfare of Persons with Disabilities”, hence a major focus of the meeting was to consider policy documents in the area of disability.

3. The Conference was held at Experts and Ministerial levels and was attended by Ministers and Experts from AU Member States, as well as Representatives from UN Agencies, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, and other International and Regional Organizations dealing with social development issues.

4. The Report of the Third Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development was duly submitted to the AU Executive Council which, in its Decision 750 (XXII) endorsed the recommendations contained therein, in particular the African Union Disability Architecture (AUDA); The Continental Plan of Action on the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010-2019); The Renewed Call for Accelerated Action on the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children and URGED all Member States to implement the Renewed Call; The African Common Position on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa; and The African Common Position in preparation for the 20th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014.

5. The AU Executive Council also requested that the Social Policy Framework for Africa (SPF) should be implemented by Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and for Member States to accelerate their implementation of the SPF through increased investment and budget allocation to the social sector.

6. The Executive Council further requested the AU Commission to:

i) Facilitate capacity building and training for social policy analysis and expertise in Member States for the successful implementation of the SPF;
ii) Facilitate the take-off of the Advisory Council on Ageing to monitor and support the implementation and follow-up of the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing;

iii) Facilitate the dissolution of the ARI through support for the Committee of 7, development of a replacement structure to ARI, as well as a transition mechanism;

iv) Follow-up on the implementation of outcomes of CAMSD3 and report thereon to the Executive Council.

II. SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

4. With regard to social policy and social protection, the CAMSD3 requested the Commission “…to provide more regular social policy analysis training for experts from Member States from the 5 regions”. Subsequently, the Commission engaged with the UN Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), in Dakar, Senegal, and trained the third group of 22 development planners from 20 Member States on social policy from 2-13 September 2013.

5. In the area of Social Protection for Children, the Commission organised an Experts’ Consultation Meeting on Children and Social Protection System in Cape Town, South Africa from 28 – 30 April 2014. The Consultation was hosted by the Government of South Africa in collaboration with UNICEF. The meeting deliberated on the challenges facing the African child, the benefits of, and the need for social protection policies, measures and systems that are responsive to the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable. Many examples of social protection programmes towards children which bore verified, evidence-based positive results for children’s health, education and nutrition, were cited from Member States such as Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Malawi, Liberia, Tunisia, Zambia, Lesotho, Mauritania, Tanzania, Algeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe. The Recommendations of the Experts’ Consultation Meeting will be considered at this Fourth AU Conference of Ministers of Social Development.

III. DISABILITY

6. Further to the decisions by the CAMSD3, the Commission incorporated the proposed amendments to the Continental Plan of Action on the Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010 – 2019) and had it printed in hard copy with the support of partners. A second round of printing is being done, in all AU languages for wider distribution.

7. The Commission furthermore engaged with partners in a two-year project to fast-track the implementation of the Continental Plan of Action of the Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010 – 2019). The project is executed from the Department of Social Affairs and, inter alia, provides for training of Member States’ government and Disabled People’s focal points over the next 18 months, in all five AU regions.

8. Alongside the Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), the second draft of the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been completed to be considered by ACHPR in Banjul, the Gambia, in October 2014. Thereafter, the draft protocol will be verified by stakeholders and circulated to Member
States for inputs to be considered at the 1st Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment in April 2015.

9. The CAMSD3 requested that the **African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) be dissolved** and appointed a Committee of Seven (7) Ministers to oversee the dissolution and liquidation of the assets of ARI. Subsequently, the Committee of 7 met from 28-30 October 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and provided leadership in this regard, resulting in the final closure on 31 December 2013, of the ARI Headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe and the Regional Offices in Nairobi, Kenya, Brazzaville, Congo and Dakar, Senegal. Staff members were paid their legal emoluments as well as salary arrears, proportional to what was available in the ARI account in December 2013 after a final audit by the Commission. Member States will be asked to pay their arrears to ARI to liquidate all the ARI liabilities to the former, retired and deceased ARI staff members as a matter of urgently.

IV. AGEING

10. The Commission convened a validation workshop on 9-11 December 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with stakeholders for final inputs into the **Draft Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons**after it was adopted by the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. The Protocol was then circulated to Member States for final approval at this CAMSD4 meeting. From this meeting, it will serve at the Conference of Ministers of Justice before presentation to the Executive Council for endorsement.

11. Once the Protocol is adopted by the AU Assembly, the Advisory Council will be instituted in terms of its provisions. In the meanwhile, a Technical Working Group has been established with stakeholders which has met in June 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and which has again convened on the fringes of this meeting. The outputs of the Technical Working Group will be revisions to the Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), as well as a Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Plan of Action.

V. THE FAMILY IN AFRICA

12. The AU Plan of Action on the Family was adopted by the AU Assembly Heads of State and Government in July 2004 with the overall objective to promote the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure the protection of and support to the African family so as to enable it to play a more effective and crucial role in Africa’s development. The Commission is in the process of revising the Plan of Action on the Family of 2004, and the revised Plan, together with its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, will be submitted to the First Session of the STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment in April 2015.

13. The African Common Position on the Family for the International Year on the Family +20, which was adopted by the CAMSD3 in November 2012, has been widely
disseminated to the African Group in New York, and other international partners. It addresses the key themes of the International Year on the Family +20, which are, the family and poverty, work-family balance and inter-generational solidarity. With world-wide attention being paid to the Family in 2014, it also became the theme for the CAMSD4 "Strengthening the African Family for Inclusive Development in Africa". Member States are urged to follow up on the implementation of the Ministerial decisions on the family, emanating from this Conference.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVIEWED CALL FOR ACCELERATED ACTION TOWARDS AFRICA FIT FOR CHILDREN

14. The Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children was adopted in 2001 which comprised of a number of priority areas for Member States to implement for the protection and well-being of Africa’s children. Among others, priorities identified for Africa’s children were the following: enhancing life chance; overcoming AIDS; realizing the right to education; realizing the right to protection; and promoting participation of youth and children in relevant developmental activities. In January 2008, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Governments adopted the Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the Plan of Action towards Africa for Children.

15. As requested by the CAMSD3 and the Executive Council, the Commission has followed up with Member States to submit their completed M&E Framework on the Call for Accelerated Action on the Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children. Once received from Member States, the completed M&E Frameworks from Member States will form the basis for the State of Africa’s Children Report 2014, which should be available in 2 months.

VII. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL POLICY INTERVENTIONS

16. All the above-mentioned action plans have a single goal, which is to help the different vulnerable groups engage with society, to empower them towards inclusion in order to take up their rightful place in society.

17. The greatest challenge for the Department of Social Affairs regarding the continental coordination of the implementation of the mentioned action plans in the domain of social development, is that development partners are no longer eager to fund our continental interventions regarding children, older persons, the family and persons with disability. We clearly get the message that Africa should look after its own vulnerable groups. It will therefore help if Member States could discuss with their representatives on the Permanent Resident Committee (PRC) to earmark funding from Member State contributions to the African Union, directly for the AUC programme budget items for social development.