



COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION  
COMMISSION, DR. JEAN PING

As the world celebrates the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the International Women's Day with the global theme of "*Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women*", I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate women world over on this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day and African Women in particular. We have yet another opportunity to take stock and reflect on the aspirations of the world on the need to attain peace, social justice and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Equality between women and men and the active participation of women in development processes have always been considered a prerequisite for the realization of international peace and security. Over the years, the need to recognize and acknowledge women's contribution to development, peace and security has become entrenched in the development discourse.

On the African continent, the African Union has continued to provide leadership in championing Gender Equality and Women's

Empowerment through its ground breaking commitments which constitute the AU Gender Architecture. AU Member States have taken another bold step through the adoption of the African Women's Decade as the framework to guide implementation of gender agenda through the 10 themes contained in the Nairobi Declaration, following the successful Launch of the African Women's `Decade on 15 October 2011, in Nairobi, Kenya. As might be recalled, the African Women's Decade Launch coincided with the International Rural Women's Day, in line with the theme of the Decade which is **"Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality Women's Empowerment"**.

As we celebrate the International Women's Day this year, we are reminded of the objective of the African Women's Decade which is to advance gender equality by accelerating the implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, through dual top down and bottom up approaches which are inclusive of grassroots participation. The Decade will re-invigorate commitments to accelerated implementation of agreed global and regional commitments of gender equality and women's empowerment.

I am sure that the following 10 themes selected as priority areas for the Decade will contribute to realizing the theme of the Decade in general and this year's International Women's Day in particular. They are: Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship, Agriculture and Food Security, Health, Maternal Mortality, HIV/AIDS and Education, Science and Technology, Environment and sustainable Development, Peace and Security and Ending Violence Against Women (VAW) , Governance and Legal Protection, Finance and Gender Budgeting, Women In Decision-making position and Energizing the African Women movement and mentoring Youth (men and women) on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The theme for 2011 is 'Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS'. This decision builds on the momentum generated by the Kampala AU Heads of State and Government's July 2010 Summit theme. I am pleased to note that the Commission will support grass roots initiatives under this theme through the Fund for African Women, established through Assembly's decision of February 2010 which is a clear

demonstration that the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government is committed to the Decade in general and to the Kampala Summit debate and to Women's Maternal Health.

Once again, let me reaffirm the AU's commitment to the equality, freedom and advancement of women and I congratulate all women everywhere as they celebrate the International Day this year.

**Jean PING**  
**Chairperson**  
**8 March 2011**