

## MINISTERS OF GENDER MEETING TO BUILD ON PROGRESS IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING

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**Addis Ababa, 2 November 2011 –** African Union Ministers of Gender are meeting at the African Union Commission to build on the important and ground breaking work of African women, as evidenced by commitments, decisions and actions emanating from the 8th African Regional Conference on Women held in Banjul, The Gambia in November 2009 and the launch of the African Women's Decade in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2010.

In his opening address delivered by the Commissioner of Social Affairs Advocate Bience Gawanas to the meeting today, the Chairperson of the AU Commission Dr Jean Ping recalled that the African Women's Decade was successfully launched on 15<sup>th</sup> October, and that the ceremony was attended by over 2,500 delegates including Heads of State and Government, first ladies, Vice Presidents, Prime Ministers, Deputy Prime Ministers, cabinet ministers, deputies and parliamentarians, heads of UN agencies, gender champions, civil society organisations (CSOs), grassroots women, youth, male champions for gender equality and women's empowerment women from all walks of life including, abled and disabled.

Since then, the Chairperson noted that follow-up actions have taken place, leading up to today's meeting.

Dr Ping also emphasized the successes that have been marked by the AU Commission in mainstreaming gender.

- 30 countries have ratified the Protocol to the Charter on Human and Peoples Rights in Africa while 32 have reported on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA)
- The Commission has a "very clear vision" for the next 10 years of the African Women's Decade. It has put in place appropriate approaches, financial mechanisms, a practical methodology and a credible governance structure to deliver on the commitments for the decade.

- The Fund for African Women is now operational. Launched by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2010, he said this vehicle for mobilizing resources for the implementation of the decade activities has proved instrumental as the Commission was able to invite member states and CSOs to submit proposals under theme No. 3 of the Decade.
- The Commission has started operationalizing the Gender Management System (GMS), under Part IV of the AU Gender Policy, as part of the new AU Specialized Technical Committee structure. Under this structure, the Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs will play an important role in determining policies on Gender and Women's Affairs in the continent.
- 29 countries have launched the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)
- He also said the Commission is encouraged by the countries that have signed the SADC Protocol and Member States that have emulated the AU parity principle and looks forward to working with them.

Nevertheless, the Chairperson urged more Ministers to participate in meetings if their work is to be more credible.

The opening session of the meeting of Ministers of Gender was also addressed by a representative of the Ethiopian Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs and of the Kenyan Embassy in Ethiopia who both highlighted the work being done by their respective governments in mainstreaming gender.

In their two day meeting, the Ministers of Gender will discuss, among others, the report of the meeting of experts held from 31 October to 1 November; report on the Gender Policy Harmonization meeting; report of expert on the capacity building workshop on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; report on the launch of African Women's Decade; composition of the proposed committee of 30, committee of 10 and steering committee on the African Women's Fund; and the UN Report of ECA experts on the committee on women and development. They will also get a briefing on PAWO at 50 and on the forthcoming COP 17 UN meeting on climate change.

The Ministerial meeting will end tomorrow with the adoption of the meeting report.

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