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The State of Eritrea Launches the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa



Asmara, 11 June 2016 - Through a concerted effort by the Ministries of Health, Labour and Human Welfare, Education, Justice, the National Union of Eritrean Women and a host of other partners, the State of Eritrea launched the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage on 11 June 2016 in Asmara. The launch was also attended by, the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, representatives from UNICEF and UNFPA, members of the diplomatic corps, religious leaders and members of local communities including children and youth.

In her opening remarks, the Honorable Minister of Health, Her Excellency, Dr. Amina Nurhusen highlighted the role that the Government of Eritrea has been undertaking to protect women and children's rights. She stated that Eritrea has been working towards ending child marriage through a multi-stakeholder approach (Government ministries, religious leaders, partners, local communities) in implementing a number of awareness raising and education programmes in both rural and urban areas on the negative effects of child marriage. There have been significant strides in the reduction maternal and child mortality as a result of preventing child marriages in the country.

The Honourable Minister of Labor and Human Welfare, Mr Kahsay G/Hiwet added that Eritrea has ratified and put into action the child protection legal instruments specifically, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the

Government has periodically reported on their activities to promote and protect the rights of the child in Eritrea. These rights have been mainstreamed in national policies and programs being implemented in Government Ministries such as- the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare, the Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice; as well as within the National Union of Eritrean Women and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students.



It was noted that even though child marriage rates have declined from 30% in 2005 to 26% in 2014, there is still much to be done for stakeholders according to the 2010 Eritrean Population Health Survey- among women aged 20-24-:13% were married by 15 years old and 41% by 18 years old. These grim statistics were made vivid through harrowing and ultimately inspiring stories of two young ladies affected by child marriage and who step by step overcame the harsh reality of this brutal practice to find hope in their lives through education and sheer determination.

The representatives of UNICEF and UNFPA stressed that through strengthened partnerships, more should be done to end child marriage by legislating stronger laws to protect children at risk of child marriage and prosecute the perpetrators of child marriage.

On behalf of the African Union Commission, the Commissioner of Social Affairs, His Excellency, Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko congratulated the Government of the State of Eritrea on launching the AU Campaign and for making great efforts to end child marriage and giving girls a chance to be productive members of society. The Commissioner stated that through the Campaign, the Commission recognizes that

child marriage is a cross-cutting issue and works on a practical level with a number of stakeholders (Member States, civil society, traditional & religious leaders, parliamentarians and development partners among others) in implementing a number of activities based on three components: advocacy, monitoring and evaluation and Facilitation of technical assistance and capacity building. He concluded that the Commission will not relent in the fight against child marriage and is committed to supporting countries, by strengthening of national strategies to end child marriage in order to reach communities most affected by this practice.

Eritrea is the 12th African Nation to launch the AU Campaign, following from the launches in Ethiopia, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Madagascar, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mali, Sudan and Ghana.

About the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa:

The AU Campaign to End Child Marriage was launched at the continental level in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 29 May, 2014, during the Conference of Ministers of Social Development. The Campaign is aimed at ending child marriage by means of supporting and advocating legal and policy actions in the protection and promotion of human rights; mobilizing continental awareness of the adverse socio-economic impact of child marriage; fostering social movement and social mobilization at the grassroots and national levels; and amplifying the capacity of non-state actors to undertake evidence based policy advocacy including the role of youth leadership through new media technology, monitoring and evaluation - amongst others.

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