

Draft Media Statement
Pan-African Women's Day 2016
31 July 2016

The African Union (AU) joins African citizens all over the continent and the Diaspora to celebrate Pan-African Women's Day on 31st July.

Every year, since 1962 when in Dar-Es-Salam July 31st was adopted as Pan-African Women's Day, at the very first convention of the Pan-African Women's Organization, which brought together women from across the continent, this day has become the symbol of African women's contribution to freedom, equality, justice and empowerment.

Emboldened by support from African Presidents who would later become the founding fathers of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), African women on that historic day also stood united to achieve in the newly formed nations the objectives of: education and literacy for girls and women, women's representation in political and public spheres, gender sensitive development agendas, ending child marriage, seeking women's consent for marriage, right to vote, gender sensitive laws, economic and social empowerment of grass-roots women and removal of harmful traditional and customary laws.

These shared values are still valid today and crystallized in Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 and its critical success factors.

Pan-African Women's Day serves as an aide-mémoire of the journey that Africans have travelled thus far and a way to look at the road ahead, especially with regard to the concrete actions that can be taken to achieve greater equality for women and assure their empowerment as partners in Africa's development. It is an awareness-raising day for African citizens, particularly today's young girls and boys, who are tomorrow's women and men, of what Africans fought for to enable them to inherit a fully emancipated continent, that promotes and protects the fundamental rights of all its citizens.

This day also recognizes and honours the great contributions that African women made in the struggle for the total liberation of the

SOME HISTORIC FACTS

- **Alimotou Pelewura** led the Lagos market women's resistance against tax increases and price controls until the British colonial administration discontinued price controls in Nigeria in 1945.
- **Mbalia Camara** led a protest in 1955 against the repression of activists of the Democratic Party of Guinea.
- **Lilian Ngoyi**, one of the leaders of the 20,000 South African women who marched to the Union Buildings - the seat of the South Africa apartheid government, on 9 August 1956, to demand an end to Pass Controls.
- **Aoua Keita** from Mali, **Jeanne Martin Cissé** from Guinea and **Pauline Clark** from Ghana, activists spearheaded the establishment of PAWO in 1962.
- **Wangari Muta Maathai** of Kenya, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her 30-year struggle for the emancipation of women, sustainable development and democracy.
- **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf** from Liberia became Africa's first female Head of State in 2006.
- **Nkosozena Dlamini Zuma**, from South Africa, was appointed the first female Chairperson of the African Union Commission in 2012.

African continent, the elimination of apartheid and the eradication of all gender inequalities and injustices.

On this day, Africa also celebrates the 54th anniversary of PAWO, Africa's first and oldest collective women's organization established in 1962, a year before the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now AU. PAWO has made an indelible mark in the history of the continent. It not only united African women from all corners of the continent to fight against the oppressive colonial and apartheid rule, but it also ensured that women's rights and gender equality are fully integrated in the liberation agenda.

As Kwame Nkrumah, the late President of Ghana, once said that "the development of a nation can be measured by the political maturity of its women", indeed Africa will be measured by the extent to which women are fully, effectively and equally integrated in its development processes.

As Africa continues to celebrate the declaration of 2016 as the year of Human Rights with a Particular Focus on the Rights of Women, Pan-African Women's Day is a renewed call to unite against poverty, inequalities, violence against women and children and conflict.

Africa let's continue our march towards Agenda 2063 and men and women, side by side, to build a prosperous Africa that will be a lasting inheritance to Africa's children.

Happy 54th anniversary to the Pan-African Women's Organisation.

AFRICAN UNION GENDER ARCHITECTURE

- The 2000 AU Constitutive Act - constitutional framework
- The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) - legal framework
- The 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) - reporting framework;
- The 2009 AU Gender Policy - policy framework;
- The 2010 African Women's Decade (2010 - 2020) - implementation framework; and
- The 2010 Fund for African Women - financial framework

When I look at my face
In the mirror
My skin courageously black
I feel like me
Absolutely free
Absolutely black
Absolutely magnificent

By Shirley Campbell