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PRESS RELEASE

THE AU HONOURS AFRICAN WOMEN DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Addis Ababa, 10 March 2017: This week, the African Union Commission (AUC)'s Women, Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) hosted the 2017 International Women's Day (IWD) celebrations under the theme: "African Women, Especially Young Women Succeeding in the Changing World of Work: 50:50 by 2063".

International Women's Day is a day of solidarity where women and progressive men come together, not only to celebrate, but also to take stock of progress made thus far in implementing gender equality and women's empowerment commitments. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness about critical gaps that must be addressed and to identify creative ways to improve the status of women across the continent.

This year's commemoration of IWD was also a time to reflect back on the history of the continent and appreciate the significant contributions that African women have made to the continent's development and especially the fight against colonialism, the elimination of apartheid and eradication of gender inequalities, discrimination and injustices against women. To this end, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the AUC, in an effort to honour the African women, launched the African Women's Historic Sculpture Garden, the African Women's Museum, and also unveiled a portrait of the founding mothers of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) and a plate of the founding members of PAWO, alongside Mrs. Assetou Koite current President of PAWO.

She also announced a project to honour other legendary women, including queens and other invisible great women who fought for the liberation of the Continent and whose



heroic exploits remained hidden in fireside stories in the remote villages of Africa. Portraits and pictures of all the women will be displayed in the AUC building alongside the pictures of the founding fathers of Africa to show that African women also contributed to the development of continent and the establishment of the AU.

The AUC Chairperson encouraged African Union

Member States to commit to eradicate all structural barriers, discriminatory laws and practices, including social and cultural norms, which hinder women from realising their full potential and from succeeding in the world of work. She called for investment in women and girls, and end to marriages of young girls and other harmful traditional practices that violate young girls' dignity and human rights as well as an end to violence against women. She further called upon African men to sign up for the HeForShe Campaign and unite to end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

The AUC also launched a report on the State of Women's Rights in Africa, which was developed with the technical support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the contribution from UN Women. The report assesses progress made using specific thematic areas where protection gaps currently persist and where accelerated action is needed, using the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa as a guiding framework.

An African Debate on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, was also held, under



the motion "We Should All Be Feminists!". The debate was followed by an Award ceremony where women who have contributed long service to the AUC were acknowledged. A total of 13 female staff members who worked between 25 and 35 years were awarded by the AUC Chairperson.

Other awards were presented, to the Chairperson and female Commissioners by the AU Staff Spouse Association, a newly founded association by the spouses of AUC Staff, whose Executive Bureau

was inaugurated. A special award was also presented to the AUC Chairperson by Mrs. Adelaide Ruiters, founder and CEO of Adelaide Ruiters Mining and Exploration, who is also winner of the 2017 Woman Super Achiever Award conferred by the World Women

Leadership Congress. Mrs. Ruiters, dedicated the Award to all Women in Africa, and to H.E Dr Dlamini Zuma, to hold in 'trust' for all the women entrepreneurs and industrialists in Africa.

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