

**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION****Press Release****African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security in Joint UN-AU High-Level Solidarity Mission to Nigeria and The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

Addis Ababa, 29th August 2017-The Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Mme Bineta Diop, represented the African Union in a joint UN-AU High Level Solidarity Mission to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), from the 19 to 27 July, 2017. The delegation which was led by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, also comprised of the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten. The main objective of the mission was to “Revitalize Women’s Participation and Leadership in Peace, Security and Development”.

In Nigeria, the delegation was received by the Acting President, His Excellency Professor Yemi Osinbajo at the State House, in the presence of members of Government, including the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honorable Geoffrey Onyeama and the Federal Minister of Women’s Affairs, Hon. Aisha Alhassan.

The meeting offered the opportunity to discuss ways to help the country advance the gender equality agenda, as a precondition for peace, security and sustainable development.

The Acting President emphasized the commitment of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to gender parity and women’s empowerment. He further stressed that gender equality was beyond a moral imperative, describing it as a social and economic imperative for sustainable development.

The high level delegation also engaged with women leaders and young women and girls affected by conflict during a working dinner organized by Hon. Minister Aisha Alhassan that saw the participation of female government officials, legislators, members of the diplomatic corps, members of the “African Women Leaders Network” and the civil society. Special Envoy Ms. Diop stressed the need for “Women to be at the core of peace, security and development.”

The delegation also met with grassroots women leaders and Chibok Girls who have been rescued from Boko Haram, during a visit at the National Centre for Women Development.

Part of the delegation, composed of the AU Special Envoy, Ms. Bineta Diop and the UN SRSG on sexual violence in conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten travelled to Maiduguri in Borno

State, where they met with the Governor, Hon. Kashim Shettima and the Operations Commander, Major General Ibrahim Attahiru.

Both leaders urged for prevention and zero tolerance toward gender based violence in conflict situations. Ms. Diop recalled her earlier solidarity mission to Nigeria in 2014 that carried a single message, “**Protect our Girls**”, in support of the Government efforts to release the Chibok Girls. She further called for greater attention to the numerous challenges faced by women and girls affected by conflict and for the need to strengthen the relationships with key partners such as the African Union at continental level for the education and empowerment of girls.

The African Union Special Envoy and UN Special Representative also visited Dalori Camp and participated in a Focus Group discussion in a Women’s Friendly/Safe Space to further gain understanding and learn from the experiences of IDP women. The delegation also met women working in peace and security in the Northeast region and humanitarian agencies.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the delegation was received by the Head of State, His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabange, and key members of the Congolese Government, including the Presidential Adviser on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MONUSCO, the diplomatic community, religious and women leaders from the civil society.

The Special Envoy conveyed the support of the African Union through the leadership of the Chairperson, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to find long-term and sustainable solutions to the multilayered challenges faced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in partnership with the United Nations. She further commended the Government’s efforts to combat gender based violence, while calling for greater representation of women in the political sphere.

The delegation held a consultative meeting with country members of the “African Women Leaders Network” and women’s organizations with the aim to show solidarity with women and girls in the context of security, humanitarian, economic and political challenges. The delegation wrapped up the four-day solidarity mission in the North Kivu region, Goma, where they visited the Women Economic Empowerment Project “Maison de la Femme” and the Mugunga IDP Camp. Displaced women have developed artisanal skills to generate income and are engaged in small savings and credit schemes to support their families. They expressed concerns on the impact of dismantling the camps without providing them with alternatives to continue these activities. The AU Special Envoy praised the actions taken by local authorities and partners to support the displaced women and stressed the need to reinforce the pro-active role played by the women in addressing needs of the communities and peace building.

Overall, the “High Level Delegation” addressed a range of gender inequality issues with the top leadership of both countries, including the importance of women’s participation in peace, security and development processes; including young women and girls.

For more information about the African Women Leaders Network initiative:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/6/press-release-new-platform-launched-to-galvanize-and-boost-womens-leadership-of-africa>

For any enquiry:

Dr. Jean-Bosco BUTERA, Special Adviser and Chief of Staff, Office of The Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, African Union Commission Buteraj@africa-union.org or Ms. Verlaine-Diane SOOBROYDOO, Policy Adviser on Women, Peace and Security at the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations Verlaine.soobroydoo@unwomen.org.

For further information:

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | DIC@africa-union.org | www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Follow us: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission> Twitter: https://twitter.com/_AfricanUnion

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission>