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Directorate of Information and Communication

Press Release No.

GENDER PRE-FORUM ON ENHANCING YOUNG WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES



Lusaka, Zambia, 01 November 2017: The African Governance Architecture Secretariat based at the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission is convening the 2017 **Gender Pre-forum** to the High Level Dialogue Democracy, Human Rights and Governance under the theme, **Building on Progress, Sustaining the Gains: Enhancing Young Women's Participation in Political Processes in Africa.**

The Pre-Forum is taking place in Lusaka, Zambia from 01 to 03 November 2017, intendeds to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space for African Governance Platform Members; seasoned women political leaders; young women in politics and those aspiring to take part in politics; gender experts; members of civil society and media fraternity; as well as development partners to reflect on progress made so far, challenges

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encountered and prospects for enhancing meaningful participation of young women in political processes in Africa.

Speaking at the opening of the Pre-Forum, Mme Marie Goretti, Regional Liaison Adviser of the UN Women Ethiopia Office, underlined the multifaceted barriers to young women's political participation. She noted among others structural and systemic challenges, including patriarchal tendencies. She underscored the timeliness of the Gender Pre-Forum in re-defining the crucial role of young women in political processes in Africa beyond rhetoric.

On his part, Mr. Sydney Watae, Senior Programme Manager for southern Africa, National Democratic Institute, reiterated the commitment of the Institute towards the development and implementation of the African Governance Architecture Women Engagement Strategy - particularly as it relates to creating more inclusive opportunities for young women in Africa.

Amb. Salah Hammad, Ag. Head of the African Governance Architecture Secretariat, while making his remarks, recognised the need to deliberately ensure young women's participation in political processes. He specifically, highlighted the importance of the proposed Women Engagement Strategy as a guiding framework for the gender mainstreaming in the work of the African Governance Platform. He reiterated the commitment of the African Governance Platform to strengthen the engagement of women in democratic governance processes at all levels.

While making the opening remarks on behalf of Mr Sindiso Ndema Ngwenya, Secretary General of COMESA, Ms. Elizabeth Mutunga, the Head of Governance, Peace and Security emphasised the need to mainstream women in all spheres of life. She highlighted COMESA's commitment to ensure gender mainstreaming in the economic aspects of its work. She noted, "political empowerment of young women is not a luxury; it is untapped potential to achieving the African We Want". She further urged all concerned to breathe life in the African Union Shared Values Instruments so as to ensure their implementation.

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About the African Governance Architecture (AGA)

AGA is a mechanism for dialogue between stakeholders that are mandated to promote and strengthen democratic governance in Africa as a way to deepen coherence, synergy and coordination. The AGA is the overall political and institutional framework for the promotion, protection and sustenance of democracy, governance, human rights and humanitarian assistance on the continent. The principle objective of AGA is implementation of AU Shared Values and in particular the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). Established in 2011 AGA is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the AU Headquarters with the AGA Platform Members across Africa.