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AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat Expresses Solidarity with the Global Campaign of 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6 December 2017 - The African Union Commission (AUC), on Monday 4th December 2017, organized a dinner-debate, in commemoration of **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**. This high-level event took place at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the presence of Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, AU officials, UN Agencies, the African Union Partners' Group (AUPG) and International Organisations. The day marked the international campaign to end violence against women and girls.

In his keynote address the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, pointed out that no religion or tradition condones violence against women and girls. The AUC Chairperson also expressed his indignation at the high prevalence of violence and abuse, and called for a stronger societal condemnation of such acts and an increased protection of women and girls. He urged all stakeholders to support and work towards concrete actions to fulfill the AU commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment and reiterated that his symbolic gesture of switching on orange lights in the AU compound was a promise to move from rhetoric to action.

In the statement of the Executive Director of UN Women, read on her behalf by Mrs. Letty Chiwara, the UN Women Representative to the AU, stressed that it was encouraging to see the contributions made by social networks in lifting the wall of silence to expose the magnitude of this phenomenon which spares no woman, regardless of her social or economic status.

H.E Dr.Mrs. Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the AU, shared the Commission's initiatives for women and girls in Africa, including the successful "CARMAA" and "Child Marriage" campaigns, and challenged women to break the silence which continues to perpetuate the status quo in our communities and professional circles.

H.E Mrs. Mmamosadinyana P.J Molefe, Ambassador of Botswana to the AU, shared the progress made in her country, while stressing that awareness campaigns and concrete actions were ongoing to address the challenges of early pregnancy and HIV / AIDS.

H.E Mrs. Mary Beth Leonard, Ambassador of the United States of America to the AU, argued that everyone had an important role to play and that leadership was essential. "In fact, in the 1970s, the American courts rendered three decisions that helped to decisively change the status of women in the State Department", she noted.

Mr. Apollos Nwafor the Representative of OXFAM International to the AU underlined that men have a key role to play including the need to promote the dignity and welfare of women and girls. He urged all to take a staunch stance to end violence against this scourge.

The Director of Administration and Human Resource Management of the AUC, Mr. Amin Idriss Adoum, stressed that the AU Commission had launched a vast project to achieve gender parity and updates to personnel policies had been recently adopted to better address sexual harassment in the workplace.

Mrs. Mahawa Kaba Wheeler, Director of Women, Gender and Development, as an **Honorary Champion**, took the opportunity to formally present the **Guidelines on Combatting Sexual Violence Against Women and its Consequences in Africa** that were developed and launched by H.E Lucy Asuagbor the Special Rapporteur for Women's Rights in Africa on November 4, 2017 during the 61st Ordinary Session of the Commission on Human and Peoples Rights of the AU. These guidelines are expected to serve as the continental roadmap in the fight against sexual violence.

Imminent panelists in a lively debate on experiences, achievements and persistent challenges in ending violence against women and achieving gender equality moderated and led by Ms. Andisiwe Nonzame Rosemond Hlungwanedoux and Mr. Abakar Souleymane Muller, youth volunteers from the AU Commission.

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