

PRESS RELEASE

**FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERIM STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE
AFRICAN WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK**

AUC HEADQUARTERS, ADDIS ABABA

18-19 DECEMBER 2017



Addis Ababa, 29 December 2017 – The African Union Commission and the United Nations, through the Office of the Special Envoy of AUC Chairperson on Women, Peace and Security and UN Women convened the first meeting of the **Interim Steering Committee (ISC)** of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) at the African Union Commission Headquarters, in Addis Ababa on 18-19 December 2017.

The African Women Leaders Network was launched following a three-day “**High-Level Women Leaders Forum for Africa’s Transformation**” that took place at the UN Headquarters from 31 May to 2 June, organized by the African Union Commission and the United Nations, with the support of the Government of Germany. The initial forum brought together over 80 women leaders, including Former Heads of State, Former Prime Ministers, Speakers of Parliaments, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations and Young Women Leaders, in a collective effort to enhance

African women Leadership in the effective delivery of Africa Agenda 2013 and the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for a true transformation of Africa.

The Interim Steering Committee meeting was convened with the overall objective to prepare the second Forum of the Network that is scheduled to take at the African Union Headquarters in the first quarter of 2018. The meeting examined various aspects including the overall purpose and vision of the Network, the governance structure modalities for the operationalization and sustainability of the Network. It brought together eight (8) members, representing the five continental regions of Africa with a balanced representation of Young women leaders and was supported by an Internal Coordination Committee composed on AU, UN Women and the German Embassy in Addis Ababa.

Introducing the Interim Steering Committee meeting, **Ms. Bineta Diop**, AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security reaffirmed the important opportunity that the African Women Leaders Network represents to change the narrative of women's leadership in Africa, and said that time had come for "**Action, Action, and Action!**" and underlined the urgency to implement the Network's Call to Action.

While acknowledging the power of cooperation, the significant synergies and partnerships built around the Network, the Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to Ethiopia, Deputy Ambassador Matthias Schauer, noted with concern the current economic and financial challenges that African Women Face. Citing Ms. Christine Lagarde, IMF Director during her recent visit to Ethiopia, he quoted that the marginalization of African Women from the economic activities costed Africa an average of ninety (90) billion per year. He reaffirmed Germany's commitment to partnering with the African Union and the United Nations to make the transformative vision of the African Women Leaders Network a reality.

Ms. Letty Chiwara, UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, AU and ECA, also noted that the Network was moving forward since the June 2017 Forum. She stressed that when "women rally around a common agenda, they make it happen", and called on ISC members to fully steer the Network forward and to ensure that the adopted "Call to Action" is implemented.

Joining the Interim Steering Committee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Marie-Louise Musangu Mwange, presented the milestone achieved at national level with the launch of the national chapter of the African Women Leaders Network. The meeting saluted the launch of the New York Group of Friends for the African Women Leaders Network, under the leadership of the Permanent Representatives of Ghana and Germany to the United Nations. The Interim Steering Committee called for the continued support

of the African Union and the United Nations for the initiative, its operationalization and future activities.

For further information, please contact 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.sobroydoo@unwomen.org .