



Press Release

Making Social Protection Systems Work for Women and Girls in Africa towards a Gender Responsive Implementation of Agenda 2063 and SDGs

Addis Ababa, April, 03 2019: The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with UN Women organised a side event on the sidelines of the 3rd Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment under the theme “**Making Social Protection Systems Work for Women and Girls in Africa towards a Gender Responsive implementation of Agenda 2063 and SDGs.** The event aimed at promoting the key continental priorities on gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) to inform the experts meeting on the social protection, labour, employment and social development agendas of the AU and Member States.

The side event highlighted outcomes of the Africa Ministerial Pre- Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Position and CSW63 on the Agreed Conclusions as well as provided an opportunity for sharing the findings of a regional study on “innovative approaches in providing social protection and access to public services for women in agriculture and the informal sector” and obtaining inputs that will inform the study and its recommendations.

The AUC representative, Mr Sabelo Mbokazi, in his remarks, appreciated the partnership with UN Women and the Government of Finland and highlighted the importance of advancing gender equality in social protection in line with the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, AU Agenda 2063 and the proposed AU Social Agenda 2063. He urged Member States to put in place measures that comprehensively respond to the gender barriers within social protection.

The UN Women Senior Liaison Adviser, Ms. Marie Goretti Nduwayo noted that the most socially excluded from Social Protection Floors in Africa are mainly women, thus further marginalising them and exacerbating their poverty levels. She underscored the need to ensure that all efforts recognise their vulnerability in the context of social protection. She reiterated the importance of the collaboration with the AUC which is aimed at promoting greater policy coherence and a more comprehensive approach to addressing poverty and vulnerability across the three interdependent but key priority sectors of social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure.

Dr. Timo Voipio, the Representative of the Government of Finland, National Institute of Health and Welfare (THL), underscored the importance of creating jobs for women particularly in the care economy. Much of the care work is the women’s shoulders as unpaid work with no social protection. By formalizing care work African societies could create millions of formal jobs in the care economy, with pension, maternity leave and health

insurance for the care workers. At the same time millions of other women could be more free to engage full time in labour markets and entrepreneurship outside the home, bringing their talents and productive inputs to the benefit of the national economies. He underlined that social protection is a right that belongs individually for all women and men. It also makes good economic sense.

During the plenary discussions, Member States recognised that social protection is central to women through out their life cycle, however, special emphasis on older women, women in agriculture and domestic work who are mostly found in informal sector and are disproportionately affected by various risks including natural disasters, violence and discrimination was made. They further highlighted the need for adopting measures aimed at reducing and averting the impact of these risk through gender responsive social protection strategies and financing mechanisms.

Experts further called for increased partnership to support capacity development of national institutions and to promote cross learning among AU Member States on innovative practices such as the minimum wage and conditions for domestic workers for contextual replication in different countries. Member States also underscored the need for innovative approaches for expanding social protection to women in the informal sector citing examples from Uganda where formal social protection system enabled workers in the informal sector to make voluntary contributions under the formal contributory schemes.

In this regard, UN Women was requested to provide technical and financial support to strengthen women's informal and community based social protection systems to ensure that they progressively move towards coverage under the formal social protection systems to ensure sustainability and increased coverage in Africa.

In closing, the AUC, UN Women and THL-Finland welcomed comment and inputs received and extended their appreciation to the AU Member States for their participation and valuable contributions and called upon for an increased commitment from AU Member States to adopt and implement gender responsive social protection systems in Africa in line with Agenda 2063 and SDGs.

The side event was technically and financially supported by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Government of Finland managing the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS).

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