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Women are sustaining momentum on peace and security in Somalia: says AU-UN leaders.

Mogadishu, Somalia, 01 November 2019 – The African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) have lauded the notable achievements in women’s participation in its peace, security and development efforts in Somalia. As part of the four-day visit in the Horn of Africa region, in the joint AU-UN mission led by the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop and the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, the delegation observed that despite of the security challenges that remain, the inclusion and participation of women in the peace and security agenda, had greatly contributed to the restoration of stability in Somalia. The two leaders were accompanied by Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga and other AU and UN senior officials.

The visit was an important reminder of the African Union’s commitment to increasing the number of women in peace operations. The AU Women, Peace and Security annual report emphasizes the urgency to increase the number of women serving in peace operations and women’s engagement with communities as a means to build trust, enhance communications and information sharing particularly with local women and youth.

The African Union Special Envoy recognized the growing trend of women’s participation in political processes including the electoral processes, not only in Somalia but in the entire continent. She reiterated the African Union’s support to a stable and secure Somalia, while lauding the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops for their commitment to restoration of peace in the country. She also strongly advocated for an end harmful practices on women. “We want to recognise the efforts by AMISOM support to the overall framework of strong advocacy for women political participation. These efforts go a long way in amplifying the voice of our women and girls but also in ensuring the women and children, have a secure environment. This is crucial in our quest to silence the guns in Africa”, the AU Special Envoy noted.

The delegation visited the AMISOM Force Headquarters, where the AU Special Envoy laid a wreath in honour of AMISOM troops and the Somali security forces who died in the pursuit of peace for Somalia. Since the establishment of AMISOM in 2007, the number of women deployed under the mission has, over the years increased with several women taking up frontline and active roles in driving combat vehicles like the tankers and Armoured Personnel Carriers, and positioned in the Forward Operating Bases (FOBs).

While recalling the historic context of the security challenges in Somalia, the ongoing violence and challenges the country still faces, as well as the progress realized so far, the UN Deputy Secretary-General noted that during their meetings with government officials and civil societies, the role of Somali women in peace and security efforts was recognized as key elements in advancing an inclusive and sustainable peaceful society. "This is the future Somalia rightly deserves and which the United Nations and African Union fully support. However, much more remains to be done, *moreso*, to ensure gender equality and inclusion of women's full participation in the 'one person, one vote' federal elections next year. This is also important to build on broader, recent gains, especially with respect to human rights, civic and political participation, access to justice and basic services," the Deputy Secretary-General added.

The aim of the one-day visit was to express the AU and UN's commitment to work with the Somali people in their pursuit of peace, stability and credible elections. The delegation underscored the importance of women being involved in peace and security efforts, particularly in countering violent extremism, holding elections and advancing development efforts.

While in Mogadishu, the Deputy Secretary-General, and the Special Envoy met with Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and cabinet ministers from the Federal Government of Somalia during which they conferred on the government policy. The delegation also met the Chairperson of the National Independent Elections Commission, Halima Ismail Ibrahim and women civil society leaders. The meetings deliberated on the country's upcoming 'one person, one vote' elections and countering violent extremism, among other topics.

The two leaders underscored the importance of the country visit summarizing it as "yet another opportunity to hear from a diverse range of voices about the role of Somali women in different spheres of life which drove home just how vibrant and engaged they are, and also how committed they are to ensuring that the role of women and gender equality is factored into all facets of life here. This means challenging some outdated traditional views on the role of women and creating a space for them to be able to fulfill their potential."

In addition, the delegation's activities included meetings with senior officials from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and UN agencies, funds and programmes to hear about the work the world body is carrying out to support Somalia's progress in areas ranging from political inclusion to social and

economic development, particularly in relation to Somalia's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The AU-UN delegation was in Somalia as part of a four-day trip to countries in the Horn of Africa region that included Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea.

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