

PRESS RELEASE

No education future for vulnerable girls unless guns are silenced



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 5th February 2020 – African leaders and partners called upon all the African Union member States to urgently put in place strategies and mechanisms to ensure education continuity for girls and young women in emergency situations. This was during the 4th edition of the High Level Dialogue on Gender Equality and Education that took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 5th February 2020.

The one-day event was held under the theme *"Silencing the Guns to ensure Safe Schools and Learning Outcomes for Girls and Women's for Africa's development"* and provided the opportunity to Member States, development partners and civil society organizations to underline the need to secure schools and ensure access and retention in education systems for girls and young women, including in conflict and fragility contexts.

In her keynote address, H.E Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, highlighted the devastating effects of conflicts on the society and

its harmful consequences for education, especially for girls and young women on the continent.

“During conflicts and crises, education is on the front line. Schools are often the first to close but last to reopen, if they ever do. Very often, what was considered at the beginning as a temporary break often becomes a permanent one. 90% of young women are more likely to be out of school in conflict areas. This has devastating consequences for girls.” The President said to depict the unbearable reality of girls affected by conflicts.

Discussions during the event revealed that only 27 African countries have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD), an inter-governmental political commitment to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities from the worst effects of armed conflicts. Participants urged all African countries to endorse and implement the Declaration to promote a “safe and conflict-sensitive” education that takes into account the reality of girls’ education in conflict and post-conflict situations.

On behalf of the President of the African Union Commission, H.E Kwesi Quartey, AUC Deputy Chairperson, invited all African Union member States to establish strong synergies to ensure that girls and young women are not left behind as far as education is concerned. The AUC Deputy Chairperson underscored: “If we want to achieve our Agenda 2063 aspirations, it is more than urgent that Africa silences the guns to ensure safe schools and learning outcomes for girls and women.”

H.E Morten Aasland, Ambassador of Norway to the AU, reiterated the political and financial support of the Government of Norway to the African Union in the area of education, peace and security and gender equality.

Participants recommended that to accelerate the attainment of ensuring learning outcomes for girls, there is a need to put in place incentive policies such as free education, appropriate school infrastructure, alternative education programmes, substantial budget allocation, gender-sensitive curricula, access to ICTs/technologies in remote areas and emergency situations.

Concerning access to technology to provide access to education for all, including in humanitarian settings, participants welcomed the Tech for All Initiative presented by the Executive Vice-President of Huawei Northern Africa Region, Mr. Philippe WANG.

In the closing speech, H.E Sarah Anyang Agbor, Commissioner for Human resources, Science and technology commended the collaboration with partners and reiterated the African Union’s commitment to working with them to sow the seeds of peace through girls’ education in Africa. She conclude by underlining that two critical issues came up

during the meeting: “silencing the guns” as the strategic vision, and continuing the fight against poverty, unemployment and gender inequality.

An outcome document with specific action points was adopted at the end of the meeting and will be disseminated education stakeholders on the continent.

Note to editors:

The African Union International Centre for Girls and Women’s Education in Africa is a specialized institution of the African Union under the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology. The Centre aims to promote girls’ and women’s education with a view towards their full participation in the eradication of poverty and the edification of a peaceful world for sustainable human development. Its mandate is in line with the vision of Agenda 2063, especially its aspiration 6, which calls for full gender equality in all spheres of life, as well as the strategic objective 5 of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (16-25) on accelerating processes leading to gender parity and equity in Africa.

For any inquiry, please contact:

Mr. Boubacar Yougbare | African Union International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa | Email: boubakary@africa-union.org

Media Contact: Mr. Jerry Lemogo | African Union International Centre for Girls’ and Women’s Education in Africa | Email: Lemogoi@africa-union.org

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