

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Meeting of African Ministers expected to adopt far-reaching decisions to advance the gender agenda in Africa.

Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs are scheduled to convene on the 27 of November 2020, to deliberate and adopt decisions on accelerating actions on gender equality and women's right on the continent. Gathering under the 5th Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (STC- GEWE), the Ministerial meeting is mandated to lead in the formulation of decisions, policies and African Common Positions; advocacy for the ratification, implementation and domestication of the African Union legal and policy instruments; advocacy at national, continental and global levels; fund raising in support of the African Union's gender agenda; advocacy for the protection, promotion and respect of women's human rights.

The 5th STC focused on "Scaling up actions on commitments to gender equality and women's rights", is preceded by the meeting of Experts, who have just concluded a two-day meeting to evaluate key gender issues. Held on the 23rd and 24th November 2020, the Experts set the ground ready for the Ministerial meeting, by evaluating and discussing among other key issues, the progress in the implementation of the African Union Gender Responsive [Responses](#) to COVID-19 aimed at cushioning the grave negative effects the pandemic has posed, threatening to reverse the progress realized in the advancing women's right on the continent over the years. The Experts also reviewed the Report of the African Women's Decade (2010-2020), assessing the achievements on the goals to empower every African women through deliberate and focused actions on "Grassroots Approaches to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment".

Addressing the meeting of Experts, the African Union Commission Acting Director of the Women, Gender and Development Directorate, Victoria Maloka said Africa has a chance to build back better post COVID-19 and ensure inclusion of women is prioritized in the recovery plans. "What this virus does that is of particular relevance to this meeting, is that it attacks women and girls disproportionately and even so, in multiple ways. This virus has gone straight into the heart of our gender and women's rights agenda and among others- destroyed women's livelihoods, it attacked women's security by creating conditions that are favorable for sexual and gender-based violence to thrive, it threatens to keep our girls out of the classroom. In short this virus has brought about a crises. But as gender equality policy makers gathered here today, how do we make sure that we don't waste this crises? How can we reimagine our

present crises to enable us to reinvent a favourable present and rebuild better for the future?" she posed.

Taking stock of the achievements of the past African Women's Decade, is particularly timely as the existing gaps and unexplored opportunities will richly feed into the development of the roadmap and strategy for the Action Plan on the new African Women's Decade on Financial and Economic Inclusion for African Women (2020-2030). The Action Plan will integrate greatly the mobilization and deployment of financial resources under the "Fund for African Women", which is being redesigned into a "Trust Fund", to ensure the resources improve and transform the lives of millions of African women through sustainable development.

Addressing the Experts meeting on behalf of the outgoing Chairperson of the Bureau of the Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (Democratic Republic of Congo), Annie Kenda reflected on 2020 as the year of celebration for gender equality and women's empowerment, marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action-Beijing+25; the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the end of the African Women's Decade (2010-2020), adding that the 5th STC on GEWE was a platform to learn from the challenges encountered and identify new approaches to accelerate the implementation of commitments. "As noted repeatedly, services to respond to and prevent violence against women and girls must be seen as essential services and should be adequately funded and be an integral part of national and local COVID-19 response plans. Governments must support the active participation of women in leadership and decision-making processes in COVID-19 responses and invest in sex-disaggregated data to ensure that gender impacts are recognized and addressed effectively. This timely meeting will consider the statutory and urgent and important issues of the Gender Equality Agenda that require ministerial consideration, adoption and decisions", she stated.

The Experts meeting also conducted the elections of its third Bureau. The Minister in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs from Benin (West Africa) is now the Chairperson of the Bureau, with the 1st Vice-Chairperson from Uganda (East Africa). The Experts, under the Chairmanship of Maimouna Baboni, representing the incoming Chairperson of the STC Bureau, during the two days, reviewed the status of implementation of the several policies and institutional frameworks to protect the rights of women. The outcome report of the Experts reflects that despite several commitments, there still exist areas for improvement and more action is required to end harmful cultural and social norms and negative gender stereotypes that continue to restrict women in the full enjoyment of their human rights. Furthermore, the allocation of sufficient financial resources to strengthen the position of women in Africa is essential.

2020 is the year African Union member states committed to the universal ratification, domestication and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human

and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, commonly referred to as the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights. The reports on the implementation of other key instruments were also evaluated that included the 2019 Reports of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA); the African Union Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Gender Parity Project to have a 50/50 representation of women and men at the African Union and 35% quota of youth making up the staff component.

To scale up actions on the commitment to ending all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa, the Experts deliberated on embarking on the process of negotiations to draft the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls. The Outcome Report of the Experts meeting with observations and recommendations will be considered at the upcoming Ministerial meeting.

Find details of the upcoming 5th Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment [here](#).

For further information please contact:

Ms_Kayitesi Jeanne Flora, Programme Officer, Women, Gender and Development Directorate: kayitesijf@africa-union.org

Doreen Apollos, Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: ApollosD@africa-union.org | www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission,
E-mail: DIC@african-union.org | **Website:** www.au.africa | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia
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