



**VIRTUAL MEETING:
13-14 DECEMBER 2021**

2nd AFRICA FORUM ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

“IMPLEMENTING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA IN THE FACE OF THE CONTINUING COVID-19 PANDEMIC”

Outcome Statement

The Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security hosted virtually the second Africa forum on Women Peace and Security (WPS) with stakeholders in the implementation of the WPS Agenda in Africa, including Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Centres of excellence, and Women and Youth Organizations on 13 and 14 December 2021. The forum focused on implementing the WPS Agenda in the face of the continuing Covid-19 Pandemic. It aimed at devising strategies for leveraging the WPS agenda as a people-centered approach in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and provide recommendations for building back better. The forum was organized in line with recommendations of the first ever forum on WPS organized in November 2020 which recommended for the institutionalization of the forum through annual convening.

The Forum was opened with remarks from various speakers being, H.E Mme Bineta Diop, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on WPS; Madam Letty Chiwara, UN Women Resident Representative to Ethiopia, AUC and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Madam Madijepetsane Charlotte Lobe, Acting Chief Operations Officer (ACOO), Department of International Relations and Cooperation in the Republic of South Africa; Dr Sarjoh Bah, Director CMD, Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) representing Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, the Commissioner for African Union PAPS; and Inès Nefer Ingani, Minister for Women Promotion and Integration in Development, Republic of Congo.

The Forum was graced with high level representation from Member States, Regional Economic Communities, Centres of Excellence and Women and Youth Organizations. In total the forum recorded about two hundred participants for the two-day online event.

The support of Denmark, Norway, USA, Germany and UN Agencies, including UN WOMEN, UNDP and UNITAR to the WPS agenda in Africa was recognized and appreciated.

The Forum was closed with remarks by H.E Kira Smith Sindbjerg, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark in Ethiopia; Dr Joannie Bewa, Founder and Executive Director of Young Beninese Leaders Association (YBLA); and H.E. Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohamed, African Union Permanent Observer to the UN. They saluted the commitment demonstrated by stakeholders who participated actively in this 2nd Forum and lauded the AUC Special Envoy on women peace and security for convening the forum and for her efforts to raise the voice of, and protection of women and girls in the transformation of Africa.

Key issues raised during the forum include but are not limited to:

- All the speakers emphasized the timeliness of the discourse on COVID-19 and its implications, not just on WPS Agenda but on women and girls broadly.
- It was noted that close to 24 months after the first case was detected, data across several African countries reveal that the pandemic is reversing gains made over the last two decades, with a disproportionate effect on women and girls. The impact areas include but not limited to:
 - **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, including teenage pregnancies and forced marriages which has accelerated into a 'shadow pandemic'
 - **Health**, especially access to maternal and reproductive health services and the new inequalities created by vaccine access.
 - **Livelihoods**, particularly of those in the informal, low-paid, and precarious incomes
 - **Education**, especially with the close downs of schools
 - **Emerging digital/ICT gap**, between those who have access to digital tools and those without and the associated challenges of connecting with constituents
 - **Increased militarization** and policing of civilians
 - Exacerbation of vulnerabilities of **women and girls in humanitarian settings** and
 - **Limited participation** of women in the policy and decision-making spaces, especially in structures within which decisions were made on COVID-19 responses.
- On the flipside, the speakers noted that COVID-19 had also put a spotlight on women's resilience, demonstrating what women can do to prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic. For example, taking actions, often with their own resources to fight against the spread of the virus in their communities, raising awareness to deal with misinformation about the vaccines and advocating for gender responsiveness in governments strategies of combating the virus. Other highlights on these efforts included:

- The initiative by HE Felix Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Chairperson of the African Union on **positive masculinity** for the elimination of violence against women and girls and creating a home for GBV survivors
- **Community-level responses** by women organizations in Niger
- **Mobilisation and coordination** by Congolese youth and young women in feeding and distributing health packages to the vulnerable residents of Kinshasa during COVID-19 lockdowns
- Young women and girls in South Africa **leveraging technology** to respond to the pandemic and
- The **role of women mediators'** network in South Africa in developing a peace infrastructure.
- **Development of the WPS-HA Compact** which started soon after COVID-19 outbreak and maps out comprehensively what each stakeholder group needs to deliver to achieve impact in the next five years, including Member States, UN Entities, regional organisations, civil society organisations, young women/youth networks, private sector, and academia.

The following **key recommendations were made to address and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on women and WPS agenda** and to ensure building back strong, which include:

1. **Gendered implications and Data:** Governments, development partners and humanitarian organisations must acknowledge the gendered implications of COVID-19 and put in place gender-responsive COVID-19 prevention and response plans as well as design long-term resilience and recovery programming, based on the collection and analysis of sex, gender and diversity disaggregated data.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Enhance monitoring and evaluation since frameworks of reporting already exists, such as the Continental Framework for monitoring and reporting on WP in Africa and Maputo Protocol Scorecard and Index (MPSI).
3. **Resources and Resourcing:** Appeal to Member States to continue mobilising resources for WPS agenda. Funding for women right' organizations and movements should be a priority, as well as funding for gender equality and women's rights.
4. **Participation of women:** Expand the space for engagement of women, especially at the policy-making and decision-making structures on COVID-19 mitigation and response strategies. Women's effective participation in decision-making leads to more responsive and effective solutions to the pandemic and, on a global level, women have shown very promising leadership in handling COVID-19 response.
5. **Health services provision:** Governments should provide safe, effective, and sufficient sexual, reproductive, and maternal health (SRNH) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) services through different ministries and institutions, including the health sector, justice sector, internal security, and local

governments, among others, with complementary services provided by non-state actors.

6. **Gender norms and practices:** Address negative gender norms and cultural practices that promote patriarchy and subjugation of women and girls. Additionally, educate boys to respect women and girls and bring to justice those responsible for SGBV.
7. **Partnerships:** Promote strengthening of strategic partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders.
8. **Militarization and over-policing:** Adopt a holistic perspective on peace and security. Address insecurity but also pursue human rights for all.
9. **Implementation of commitments on WPS and Humanitarian Action:** Accelerate implementation of existing commitments on WPS and Humanitarian Action for the next five years. The launch of the global compact on WPS-HA in the auspice of generation equality forum offers a great opportunity to step up efforts. There is now need to go beyond adoption of these policies and upscale efforts to transform commitments to tangible results for women and girls in Africa
10. **Women's inclusion in COVID-19 and future emergency plans and programmes:** Adopt various post-covid strategies for gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) and women's rights to peace to protect further erosion of gains and rights of women across the continent.