

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **“One-Stop Center”, protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence in the Sahel.**

The African Union Commission (AUC) has concluded a two-day regional consultation meeting of stakeholders from the G5 Sahel aimed at strengthening approaches and actions on the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence in the Sahel Region. The meeting is part of the implementation of the project **“Strengthening the protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence in the Sahel region”**, initiated by the AUC through the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE-WPS), in partnership with Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and with the support of the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Convened in Niamey, Niger on September 5 and 6, 2022, the meeting focused on among others, the mapping study on sexual and gender based violence in the Sahel region, the formulation of recommendations for the effective implementation of shelters and care centers for women and girls’ victims of violence, commonly referred to as “One-Stop Center” for a holistic and multidisciplinary approach in

provision of medical, legal/ investigative, psychosocial, security, and other needs to assist victims of sexual and gender-based violence; the validation of the regional action plan for the protection of women and girls against sexual and gender-based violence in the G5 Sahel region; identification of regional approaches to mobilize resources to address sexual and gender-based violence and potential funding partners; and sharing of country experiences and best practices particularly by Senegal and Rwanda with similar one-stop centre initiatives.

The consultations were chaired by H.E. Mrs. Allahoury Aminata, Minister of Women's Promotion and Child Protection as represented by Minister of Industry and Youth Entrepreneurship, H.E. Gourouza Salamatou, Mme Diye BA, Regional coordinator of the G5 Sahel Women Platform and Mme. Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, with the participation of civil society organizations, experts on issues of violence against women and girls, and national coordinators of the G5 Sahel Women's Platform.

The instability in the Sahel region contributes to the exacerbating vulnerability of women and girls. Reports on sexual and gender-based indicate that the violence includes widespread abuse and exploitation, trafficking, forced marriages and child marriages, unwanted pregnancies, and an increase in rape and other forms of sexual violence as conflict, violence and insecurity persist. Women and girls make up 50% of the population and their contribution to development is significant.

Given these complex characteristics, the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security has supported the women's initiatives in the Sahel for several years, contributing to the launch of the Sahel Women's Peace Platform in 2015 in Ndjamena, Chad. It is also in this sense that the United Nations and the African Union Commission have conducted joint solidarity missions in the Sahel region in 2018, in support of women's initiatives to improve the security and livelihoods of communities in the region.

In May 2019, the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security organized a regional meeting on Women, Peace and Security in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to take stock of women's actions for peace, share experiences, and strengthen collaboration in the search for solutions. More recently, the Special Envoy initiated a solidarity consultation with the women of Mali, in support of their initiative to find solutions to the country's socio-political crisis and play a meaningful role during the transition. One of the priority issues they presented was the development of specific legislation to combat gender-based violence.

Building on previous commitments, the "One Stop Centre" initiative thus enhances collaboration and synergies in the collective and individual strategies to strengthen the protection of women against sexual and gender-based violence in the Sahel region.

While in Niamey, AU Special Envoy Mme. Bineta Diop was granted audience by H.E Mohamed Bazoum, the President of the Republic of Niger, where she briefed him on the regional consultations and the progress and impact of the African Union efforts,



working closely with stakeholders at the national and regional levels, in addressing the challenges that continue to hold women and girls back. H.E President Bazoum committed the full support to the “one-stop centres” initiative and underscored the need to ensure efforts in peace and security are inclusive and leave no one behind, especially the vulnerable groups such as women and the youth.

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