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Accountability on ending scourge of violence, women fund, and Gender statistics among outcomes of AU Ministerial meeting.

The development of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on preventing and eliminating the scourge of violence; the universal ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights; the continental funding mechanisms for women, are among the key outcomes adopted in the Ministerial meeting of the [8th African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#) (STC on GEWE). Convened on 13 November 2023 under the facilitation of the African Union Commission's [Women, Gender and Youth Directorate](#), AU the Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs considered and adopted far-reaching decisions that will protect and promote women's rights on the continent.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains one of the critical impediments to women's realization of their fundamental rights including the rights to life, human dignity, peace, justice, socio- economic and political development. To secure political commitment and amplify renewed state accountability to protect, promote and fulfil women and girls' rights to be free from violence, the STC on GEWE considered in favour of the AU to kick-starting the process of negotiating an African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. The Convention will complement existing binding and non-binding legal instruments on VAWG such as the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights and the Solemn Declaration on Gender. A consultative approach in developing the Convention will be enable the African citizenry articulate issues to be covered, and recommendations to be included in what will be

the first continental legally binding framework on preventing and ending the scourge of violence on the continent.

The AU has since established an AU High-Level Presidential Initiative on Positive Masculinity rallying for more actions and support from men and boys to prevent and end violence against women and girls. The [3rd Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity](#) is scheduled for 27-28 November 2023. Relatedly, the Ministers considered the [Regional Action Plan for Africa](#) on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls as a continental framework to guide Member States efforts in translating global and regional commitments into strategies and actions at regional and national levels to end violence against women and girls.

Following the adoption of the Declaration in February 2020 on 2020-2030 as the Decade of African Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion, the AUC has since embarked on actualizing the realization of the goals for the decade and will develop a 10-year continental AU Strategy and Action Plan that identifies innovative and concrete actions for the AU to close the gender gap in financial inclusion and provide. The operationalization of the [Trust Fund for African Women](#) (TFAW) is currently underway as one of the concrete solutions available for women to realize economic justice and financial inclusion.

African Union Member States have made collective and individual commitments to the advancement of the rights of women and girls in Africa. While celebrating the gains made over the decade, the STC-GEWE deliberated on the status of ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ([Maputo Protocol](#)). 2023 marks 20 years since the adoption of the Protocol. Year-long commemorative activities launched earlier in the year have taken stock of achievements made in the promotion and protection of women's human rights over the last 20 years since the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, reflecting on key challenges and impactful solutions and strategies to accelerate better action and outcomes for the African women's human rights system. The Ministers committed to rally more action at the national level to address the challenges of accountability and tracking of implementation of the commitments on gender equality and women empowerment.

To ensure African Union's decision-making processes on gender and youth are evidence-based and finely attuned to the unique needs and challenges confronted by African women and youth, Ministers considered the proposal on strengthening evidence-based decision and policymaking supported by a robust statistics system for timely, accessible, and reliable Gender and Youth Statistics. Greater gender production and use of data will shape the national gender and national youth indicator frameworks that reflect the gender and youth strategies and programs which will enhance the mainstreaming of gender-responsive budgeting, programmes, and address capacity building gaps at the national, regional and continental levels.

The ministers also took note of the areas of focus in the Commission on the Status of Women Africa Consultations whose Ministerial was scheduled for 14th November 2023 and whose outcomes carves a Common African Position to influence the global Agreed

conclusions at the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women Consultations to be convened in March 2024.

H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission restated the African Union's commitment to elevate the role of women in all spheres of life and to address the vulnerabilities and challenges they face. "This STC is important to confront these challenges, ensuring that no woman or girl is left behind. This is our platform to unite, share knowledge, and galvanize collective efforts towards dismantling the barriers that continue to impede the progress of women and girls. It is our opportunity to deliberate, strategize, and implement measures that will have a lasting impact on the lives of African women, who, for too long, have endured injustices."

H.E Madam Amongi Betty Ongom, Uganda's Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and STC Chairperson underscored the importance of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. She stated the urgency to "ensure that periodic progress reports by Member States on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, UN Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security and other AU Plans and Programmes are submitted in time. This will enable the AU Commission to compile comprehensive reports on the implementation of the respective commitments to inform our future plans."

As Member States, and regional institutions continue to struggle with multiple challenges, including climate change whose impact on the continent's economies, livelihoods and nature is hitting the most vulnerable hardest; conflicts in multiple parts of the continent and indeed the world, whose impact we feel daily even beyond the battlefield; and the ongoing COVID19 recovery which calls on Africa to increase her capacity to navigate future crises, Prudence Ngwenya, AU Commission Director of Women, Gender And Youth Directorate, noted that progress has been achieved in key areas of gender equality. "Even as we continue to face challenges, we have however made achievements in several areas such as women's political participation and representation where some Member States have surpassed set thresholds; in legislative reform for ending violence against women and girls and in Financial and Economic Inclusion and Education as some countries have managed to make significant investments and to close gender gaps."

Chido Mpemba, AU Chairperson Youth Envoy observed that despite the increased digital participation from Africa, young women and adolescents are unable to access reliable internet connectivity and to fully participate in events and conversations pertaining to their own identities and well-being. "The fractured infrastructures in the African continent are complemented by the lack of access to resources to connect to the internet, including means such as laptop and cellphones to join gatherings or get to know of present at national, regional and international levels." She called for intensified actions to address the gender divide.

The STC ministerial meeting was preceded by a two-day Experts meeting on the 8-9 November 2023.

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