

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African women mobilize to end hostilities in DRC in structured support to ongoing peace processes.



Women from across the continent have mobilized to support H.E. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Champion of the AU for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa, in his pivotal role as the mediator through the Luanda Process, as mandated by the AU Heads of State and Governments in the Extraordinary Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in May 2022.

At the just [**concluded High-Level Regional Forum of Women of the Great Lakes Region**](#) convened in Luanda, Angola on the 18-19 October 2024 focused on strengthening women's participation and leadership in peace and security processes in the Great Lakes Region, the women developed pathways to centralize the role of women and civil society in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding processes, and post conflict reconstruction. They explored ways to enhance their intervention to end the conflict in the Great Lakes region including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly the Eastern DRC region that has accounted for the largest portion of the devastating effects of the conflict including mass displacement, sexual violence, loss of livelihood and economic power, limited access to healthcare, education, food and other basic needs.

The outcomes of the forum are critical in supporting the enforcement of ceasefire agreements, and accountability through information sharing between the facilitation teams and women.

Guided by the ongoing Luanda and Nairobi regional peace processes, the decisions of the Africa Union, the United Nations as well as the International Conference on the Great lakes Region (ICGLR), and data from the AU Continental Results Framework (CRF) for Monitoring and Reporting on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the 'Pact of the Future', the forum called for an immediate end of armed conflict and

urged the parties to respect International Humanitarian Law and other commitments made under regional legal and policy frameworks. The Forum also underscored the importance of the proposed mechanism where women leaders supported by technical experts and women at the community and national levels will substantively support the ongoing mediation efforts under the leadership of the Mediator.

Despite various efforts to ensure that Africa achieves Aspiration 4 of the African Union's Agenda 2063, which calls for 'A peaceful and secure Africa', H.E. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, observed that the continent is still confronted with various armed conflicts that destabilise the countries and compromise their development. The President underscored the significance of dialogue-based approach to conflict prevention and resolution and the role of women in peacebuilding.

He stated, "Our experience in building peace after a long-armed conflict has taught us the importance of involving women in all stages of peace processes. Despite the good examples, women are still very under-represented in the formal processes of prevention, management, resolution of armed conflicts and reconciliation between disagreed parties, so we need to step up our efforts in the current regional security context to remove the barriers that prevent or limit their participation. As carers, educators and community leaders, women have taken the lead in community peace initiatives, acting as mediators and negotiators in local conflicts, building the trust so necessary in this type of process, bridging divides and facilitating dialogue."

African Union Commission Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace, and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop regretted the continued suffering of women in conflict zones, however lauding their remarkable courage and commitment to prevent and end the hostilities and rebuild their communities. She noted that "this great mobilisation expresses the will of all these women to contribute constructively to the return to peace in the Great Lakes region. They are here to demonstrate in the clearest terms their unfailing support for the mediator. This process will have to address all the issues of security, development and mineral resources that are at the heart of the conflicts. Both parties need to sit down around the table. This should include women, who are often forgotten when it comes to sharing the wealth generated by natural resources. The participation of women in peace processes is not only a right, but also the path to lasting peace."

H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, former President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia called for the full participation of women in peace processes to achieve sustainable peace. She noted, "we want women to participate in numbers but also granted security to participate at the community level. Women should not be selected as mere numbers but considered for their expertise. We have to leverage from the diversity of actors to enable us achieve wholistic solutions in the entire peace process. In Africa we have brave women who make sacrifices every day to protect their communities. We have many women mediators at the community levels. Our support should not just on giving millions of dollars in these processes but wholistic solutions that allow inclusion for sustainable solutions."

Ms. Julienne Lusenge, the Deputy coordinator of the National Mechanism for monitoring the Addis Ababa framework Agreement observed that without peace in

DRC, there can never be peace in the region or the continent. “Women from DRC need active participation and that is why we implemented the Addis Ababa framework platform for women participation- women from DRC, Uganda, CAR and Congo met and crafted solutions. The participation of women in the Luanda process for the great lakes region is important and will reinforce the importance of capacity building.”

H.E. Maria do Rosário Bragança, State Minister for Social Affairs highlighted the knowlegde of women on issues of peace and security, human rights, democracy and called for their inclusion in peace and security processes. “We are reinforcing the participation on women in peace processes and especially for women in the Congo region as well as the economic development of the women in the region. This meeting is evidence of bringing people from across the continent to address peace issues and reconstruction and the significance of gender integration.”

In attendance were, among others, the former President of the Republic of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, former President of the Central African Republic, H.E. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, former Minister of the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and former Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Leonnie Kandolo Minister of Gender of DRC; HE Dr Charles Rudakubana, Ambassador of Rwanda in Angola, Ms. Luzia Inglês Van-Dúmen, Regional Secretary of the Pan-African Women’s Organization, H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, Amb. Liberata Mulamula, Member of the Tanzanian National Assembly and Member of the Great Lakes Advisory Council, and Hon. Lady Justice Effie Owour, Chair of the AU Panel of the Wise and Co-Chair of FemWise-Africa.

During the forum, the President of Angola was awarded African Women Leaders Network’s (AWLN)’s Champion for Positive Masculinity in recognition for his personal commitment for a peaceful future for Africa and his leadership role in women’s empowerment as demonstrated by this Forum

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