

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release

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Venue: New York, USA

CSW70: AU CIEFFA and IWPG join forces to spotlight girls' education as a lever for peace and leadership in Africa



The African Union International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU CIEFFA), in collaboration with the International Women's Peace Group (IWPG), organised a high-level side event on the margins of the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70). Held at the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, the event focused on the theme: *"Mobilising girls and women's education for leadership, resilience, and transformation of conflict-affected communities."*

Bringing together officials like the Botswana Minister of Youth & Gender Affairs, high-level officials, parliamentarians, and international institutions, this meeting sealed a historic consensus: girls' education is no longer simply a social option, but a strategic lever that is essential to the reconstruction and stability of the African continent.

H.E. Prof. Gaspard Banyankibona, AU Commissioner for ESTI, while delivering his opening remarks, linked this ambition to the African Union Decade of Education (2025–2034), stressing that we cannot demand female leadership while depriving girls of the intellectual tools to exercise it. He called for a radical transition: moving women from beneficiaries to decision-makers in post-conflict governance.

In a context of persistent crises, Ambassador Mohamed Edrees, Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU) to the United Nations (UN) reiterated the urgent need to act on behalf of the most vulnerable: *"In humanitarian crises, girls are the first to be*

excluded from school and the last to return.” For the AU, ensuring a safe learning environment is a prerequisite for the emergence of a new generation of women leaders capable of steering peace processes. Ms Nayeong Jeon, Chairwoman of IWPG, showcased the transformational impact of peace education, enabling women who have experienced conflict to rebuild agency and lead change in their communities.

The dialogue highlighted concrete initiatives:

- **Côte d'Ivoire:** Representing the Minister of Family, Women and Children, Mr. Lamarane Barry, Deputy Chief of Staff presented a robust model including the first national budget dedicated to education, the fight against menstrual insecurity, and “second chance” schools for victims of crises.
- **Parliamentary Action:** Hon. Amina Tidjani-Yaya from Chad called for strict domestication of AU instruments to ensure the presence of women at the negotiating table.
- **#Africa Educates Her Campaign:** It was presented by Mr Yougbare Boubakar, Programme Officer at the AU CIEFFA. The Campaign launched by the AU CIEFFA in 2020, this initiative has now mobilised 16 countries and relies on unprecedented partnerships with traditional and religious leaders to reintegrate girls who have dropped out of school.

Key recommendations and outlook

Moderated by Ms Lorato Modongo, AU CIEFFA Gender and Research Officer, participants formulated a clear roadmap for transforming resilience into leadership:

- 1. Increased education Financing:** Increase national budgets to break dependence on humanitarian aid.
- 2. Ensuring Quality and Safety:** Strengthen school infrastructure and the safety of female students and teachers.
- 3. Inclusion:** Ensure the systematic participation of young women in mediation bodies.

In closing, Mrs Simone Yankey, Coordinator of AU CIEFFA, called for a renewed commitment to transforming political will into tangible action, reaffirming that education remains the cornerstone for correcting historical inequalities and building the peaceful, prosperous, and resilient Africa.

The event concluded with the announcement of the **2nd AU Pan-African Conference on Girls' and Women's Education (AU/PANCOGed2)** in June 2026.

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