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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION

DELIVERED BY HE MRS FATIMA ACYL,

COMMISSIONER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

TO THE

GENDER IS MY AGENDA PRE-SUMMIT CONFERENCE

8-9 June 2015

Sandton, Johannesburg

Programme Director

Leadership of GIMAC and Civil society

The President and Leadership of the Pan African Women's Organisation

Mme Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the AUC Chairperson on Women, Peace and Security

Veterans of the African women's movement

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is truly an honour for me to address this meeting of GIMAC, on behalf of Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who unfortunately cannot make this meeting due to other continental duties she is undertaking.

For those of you who know my boss, Dr. Dlamini Zuma takes the issues of African structural transformation very seriously. She always reminds our heads of state and leadership, if they are serious about development and shared prosperity, they cannot ignore more than 50% of our population, the women. If we don't empower women, we will function at halve capacity, and it will be a huge missed opportunity. When talking to and about women, there is no big or small gathering for the Chairperson and she would have loved to be here today.

She also most definitely shares your commitment to move from solemn declaration to solemn action.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by congratulating GIMAC for once again providing this critical platform for civil society and women's organisations, to meet, to reflect on progress and jointly strategize on how we should push forward our Pan African agenda.

In January this year, on the margins of the Summit in Addis Ababa, we discussed the theme for the Year: Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality for the realisation of Agenda 2063.

We agreed that we must use this year to make decisive progress on key areas, and identified the six priority areas: health and reproductive rights; financial inclusion and women's empowerment; peace and security; representation and education and skills with a focus on STEM and women in agriculture.

Since then, we have focused on the practical issues to take each of these priority areas forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am sure that this GIMAC forum will take stock of where we are and the practical issues needed as we finalise the first ten-year plan for Agenda 2063.

Let me highlight a few of these issues, which we want to address at this Summit.

Firstly, during the Malabo Summit on Agriculture, and in the Agenda 2063 consultations, women farmers appealed to us to relegate the handheld hoe to the museum. We have listened and at this Summit we will launch the campaign to replace this relic with more modern technology, and to achieve this in the next ten years.

Secondly, the Summit will also launch the start of negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Area, and on 10 June 2015 tripartite of SADC, Comesa and EAC composed of 23 countries concluded an agreement in Shamal Sheik as an important step in this direction.

As we know, women make up the majority of cross border trades (up to 85%), we must therefore look at ways to ensure that the voices and issues of women traders feature prominently in the CFTA negotiations.

Thirdly, as indicated in January, we will be launching at this Summit the inaugural African Gender Scorecard, as an instrument to monitor progress and share best practice, so that we hold each other and our governments accountable for the implementation of our gender instruments such as the Protocol and the Solemn Declaration.

In addition to these issues, we will at this Summit and for the remainder of the Year also continue to pay attention to the issue of financial inclusion and economic empowerment, as well as health, reproductive rights and the focus on skills, science, technology and innovation.

On financial inclusion, the Ministers of Finance and Planning at the March meeting discussed the issue of women's access to credit in the content of the first 10 year plan on Agenda 2063, as well as domestication of Agenda 2063. The Chairperson of the AUC wants to also involve Central bankers as well as the private sector in addressing this issue of access to credit for women.

Dr. Dlamini Zuma on this occasion said:

‘We must move away from always talking about micro credit and micro enterprises when we talk about women. There is nothing micro about us. There is nothing micro about women.’

The voices and actions of civil society remain critical to taking our struggle for gender equality and women’s empowerment forward. We therefore wish this GIMAC forum all success, and look forward to the outcomes of your deliberations.

I thank you.