

**38TH GIMAC PRE-SUMMIT CSOS CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON
GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE AFRICAN UNION AND MEMBER
STATES
STATEMENT BY
AFRICAN UNION SPECIAL ENVOY ON YOUTH MS CHIDO ON
BEHALF OF AUC CHAIRPERSON**

03 February 2022

Your Excellences,

Special Rapporteurs,

Special Envoys,

Goodwill Ambassadors,

Members of other AU Institutions

Development Partners

Distinguished Participants present in Addis Ababa and those connected online,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. I am pleased to join all of you for the 38th GIMAC Pre – Summit meeting on the African Union theme of the year; ‘Building Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent: Accelerate Human Capital, Social and Economic Development.’

The African Union 2022 theme has been informed by Aspiration (1) of Agenda 2063 which envisions for a ‘prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development’ noting the critical significance of developing the human capital and building a healthy and well-nourished population. The declaration asserted nutrition,

particularly child nutrition, as the foundation to human capital development and social and economic transformation of Africa.

The 2022 theme echoes legal instruments of the African Union dedicated to tackling malnutrition; The Africa Health Strategy 2016 – 2030; The Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015 – 2025 (ARNS); The Declaration on Nutrition Security for Inclusive Economic Growth and Sustainable Development in Africa; The Resolution on the Establishment of an OAU Inter-African Centre for Food Science, Technology and Nutrition; the African Union.

Continental Scorecard for Nutrition. These instruments were adopted by the African Union to amplify, streamline and connote nutrition as a major pillar to advancing the continent's human capital as a guarantee to ensuring improved lives for individuals, higher earnings and improved incomes for countries and the ultimate realization of Africa's socio-economic development.

The ARNS has provided specific targets toward reduction of malnutrition, nonetheless, progress is not rapid enough to meet neither the continental nor the global sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 2.2 to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The continent is way behind in achieving its target to end hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. According to recent statistics by the Relief Web-intel report in 2021, 281.6 million population of the continent, which is over one-fifth, faced hunger.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls matter for nutrition because they have an important bearing on the three underlying determinants of nutrition which include food security, care practices and health.

Women's social status within the family also determines the quality of care provided to children, as it is interlinked with child nutrition. Their status dictates women's access and control over household resources and decision-making power in regards to dietary needs and household food consumption in addition to division of labour.

Women and girls play a critical role as producers and enhancing productivity with an implication on food consumption and economic or monetary return at national and household levels. Women make up 43% of the agricultural labour force in the

developing world, 57% with the share rising to 50% in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, their access to (or control over) natural and productive resources and services such as land, production resources, finance, market, information, government authorities and services including extension and rural advisory services are compromised due to stereotypical societal norms.

Research shows that the reduced agricultural productivity of women due to gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources costs Malawi USD 100 million, Tanzania USD 105 million and Uganda USD 67 million every year. Closing this gender gap could lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 119,000 people in Uganda and 80,000 people in Tanzania every year. Despite representing 43% of the global agricultural labour force, women represent only 15% of agricultural landholders. Nearly 1 billion women are unbanked, and the global level of discrimination for women's access to formal financial services is at 13%.

COVID-19 is causing serious disruption of women's informal safety nets. In East Africa, women began feeling economic losses and food insecurity early, as 74% of working women are in the informal economy. It is further estimated that the number of people facing food crisis will likely double as a result of the pandemic and women-headed households are most likely to be significantly affected. Evidence shows that the human cost of women's lower status is very high in the region. If women and men enjoyed equal status, child malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa would decrease by nearly 3 percentage points – a reduction of 1.7 million malnourished children under three.

The 38GIMAC Meeting aims to take stock of the achievements so far, outline the challenges, and table proposals on how the AU, RECs and other key stakeholders can, in their collective capacities, guarantee the realization of the initiatives. This will require leveraging strategic partnerships and building institutional capacities to carry out the outlined actions and monitor and evaluate them. Hence, 38th GIMAC will be a space for women and girl's rights organizations to articulate their proposition that is gender-responsive, efficient, and practical for Africa.

The African Union theme of the year, therefore is an opportunity to advance the advocacy for a GTA to malnutrition. It offers the space to engage in robust

transformation of values and for positive positioning of values and redesigning structures that promote women's access and control to productive and financial resources, participation in decision making and leadership, access to gender centred government incentives and structures.

The AU existing instruments and campaign such as Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy, The AU Health Strategy, the Decade of for Women's Financial Inclusion, AU Flagship projects African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the campaign on eliminating gender based violence, child marriage and maternal mortality are strategic entry points for this transformative agenda. Moreover, the Decade of for Women's Financial Inclusion is an equally strategic lever for sustaining the theme of the year within a multi-year process related to the economic empowerment of women.

I am very pleased at the contributions of African women and girls who continue to create positive change, through their agricultural products, human capital and building a healthy and well-nourished population. I also commend the GIMAC Network for Strengthening intergenerational and women's rights approach towards transformation of culture for greater protection of women's rights, ending violence against women and girls, especially child marriage.

As I conclude, I call on the GIMAC Network to work closely with the African Union Commission, African Union Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, Regional Economic Communities, United Nations agencies and other civil society entities, to ensure that there are proper policies addressing the nutrition and food security value chain systems as well as safeguarding their rights.

I Thank you.