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**CLOSING REMARKS BY MRS. ANGELA MARTINS, ACTING DIRECTOR
FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND SPORT AT THE AU HIGH
LEVEL SIDE EVENT AT THE CSW -68**

THEME: “QUALITY & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR GIRLS’

***EMPOWERMENT: A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR ENDING HARMFUL
PRACTICES”***

**13 March 2024
10H30 – 12H00 EST**

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the H.E. Amb. Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development and H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AU), I'm pleased to deliver the closing remarks at this AU CSW68 High-Level joint Side Event by HHSD and AU CIEFFA which is in line with the AU 2024 theme on Education linking it with protecting girls against harmful practices.

We would like to start by expressing gratitude to H.E. Amb. Kyari Mohamed, the Head of the AU Permanent Mission to the United Nations and her team for all the support they have rendered us in making this side event possible.

We also take the opportunity to appreciate the representative of the Honorable Minister Children, Minister of Family, Women and Children, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Senator Diaby Makoni, and the representative of the Honorable Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Republic of Uganda, Dr. Aggrey Kibenge, for taking time to make remarks and share their perspectives on this key topic on strengthening quality education for girls' empowerment.

We also thank all our partners for participating in the event namely UNESCO and UNICEF and World Vision International who supported us with interpretation services.

I would like to acknowledge the great collaboration between the Member States, UN Agencies, Partner Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the youth present here for the continued efforts to the work of HHSD and AU CIEFFA. Your support cannot be taken for granted, we always value your active participation in all the programs and activities that the AU is implementing.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guest,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

The AUC is committed to promoting the empowerment of girls through education and by combating harmful practices. As you are aware, we have already moved forward at different platforms in making a special call to Member States including Civil Society Organizations, Development Partners, children and youth and other key stakeholders in the continent to continue addressing issues that infringe on girls' education targeting the most at risk of school dropout, child marriages, FGM and all forms of abuse and violence.

We highly encourage AU Member States to implement their commitments on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and to use the opportunity provided by CSWs meetings to reflect and if necessary review their national strategies on education, child protection and other related areas in order to address the cultures and beliefs that infringe on their right to all forms of education- formal, informal, skills training and digital learning.

Education must not be seen as a luxury but as a necessity. We therefore emphasize that, Member States should put in place measures that comprehensively respond to the increased gender inequality that exposes girls and women to vulnerability.

In conclusion, We assure you that all the discussions that we have had today, and the recommended outcomes/actions will not be neglected, the AU Commission will take them forward through its planned programs and activities such as the 4th African Girls Summit, which the Commission is discussing the dates with the Host Government, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to be held in the latter half of this year and also during the

upcoming Specialized Technical Committee on Labour, Employment and Social Development planned to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 29 July to 2 August 2024.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen**

We once again express our appreciation, particularly to the esteemed panellists who presented very eloquently at this event. Thank you also to the HHSD and AU-CIEFFA colleagues for jointly working together for this side event and in striving to put women and girls always as a priority.

*Let me conclude by saying this “**Achieving the Africa we want by 2063, is possible, it starts with me and you**”.*

Thank you for your attention and your time.