

AFRICA PRE-COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN’S SIXTY-EIGHT (CSW68) MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING, EXPERTS GROUP VIRTUAL PRE-CONSULTATIVE MEETING UNDER THE PRIORITY THEME:

Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective

KEY MESSAGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CSW68

PREAMBLE

1. We, African Union (AU) Ministers responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs meeting at an hybrid virtual/in person consultative meeting on 14th November 2023 at UN ECA, Addis Ababa Ethiopia, in preparation for the sixty-eight (68) session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) on the priority theme: “*Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective*”, with a view to build consensus on strategies and actions for ensuring that African women and girls are not left behind by development policies, processes and institutions aiming to eradicate poverty, reform the financial system and strengthen development institutions.
2. **Reaffirming** the agreed obligations and commitments made in all international and regional normative frameworks on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, elimination of poverty, accelerating development, financial inclusion and combating the adverse effects of climate change.
3. **Guided** by the African Union Agenda 2063 seven aspirations and twenty-two goals, expressing Africa’s determination to eradicate poverty in one generation and build a prosperous Africa, based on Aspiration 6 on inclusive growth and sustainable development, as well as a shared prosperity through social, economic transformation of the Continent.
4. **Reiterating** the statement made in the African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028, that “Women in Africa remain the majority of the poor, the dispossessed, the landless, the unemployed, those working in the informal sector and those shouldering the burden of care, yet lacking access to sexual and reproductive care”.

5. **Recognising** that the resurgence of different forms of conflict including armed conflict, climate change, natural disasters and pandemics have intensified the state of women and girls' poverty, by increasing the burden of care, food insecurity, and the prevalence of high rate of violence, which all push women behind in all other spheres of their lives
6. **Cognisant** that inequalities, especially gender inequality continue to cause heightened vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and further entrench inequalities and access to social protection and economic empowerment.
7. **Recalling** the CSW 60/2 Resolution on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and fully implement it towards ending the unequal burden of the epidemic on women and the girl child.
8. **Further Recalling** decisions, pledges and commitments made by Africa's member States in the numerous International and Africa Regional fora, specifically the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), the Outcome of the third Conference on Financing for development, to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are at the centre of the financing for development frameworks, programmes, and policies.
9. **Convinced** that poverty and inequality require deliberate and systematic social, political, and economic policies and measures, by governments and all other stakeholders.
10. **Reiterates States agreed** obligations and commitments enshrined in various international and regional Human Rights treaties, Convention and declarations to guarantee women's economic rights, access and uptake of financial services for poverty eradication and economic empowerment;
 - The CEDAW (1979) which calls on States Parties "to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: the right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit" (Art. 13 (b) (United Nations, 1979)
 - The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) which states that governments should "promote and support women's self-employment and the development of small enterprises, and strengthen women's access to credit and capital on appropriate terms equal to those of men through the

scaling up of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including, as appropriate, non-traditional and mutual credit schemes, as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions" (para. 166 (a) (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995).

11. *Aware* of initiatives taken by African Member States, African Union institutions, and Regional Economic Communities to ensure women's financial and economic inclusion in implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); and in consideration of the African Women's Decade on financial and economic inclusion and the AU Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion Initiatives (2021-2030).

12. *Call* for systematic strengthening of institutions and financial mechanisms for eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

KEY MESSAGES¹:

13. Women's poverty can be understood as a process of deprivation and depletion shaped by structural inequalities in the household, labour market, and state institutions, and exacerbated by women's experience of compounded discrimination.

14. It deprives women of the right to enjoy a decent standard of living, food security and nutrition, housing, quality healthcare and education. The disproportionate amount of care and domestic work performed by women limits their time, access to decent work, quality education and health care.

15. This deprivation can also be seen in women's unequal access to land and productive assets, finance, and in the restriction of their ability to participate fully and meaningfully and be included in policy decision making processes, including on issues of financing.

16. It is therefore imperative to "look beyond level and growth of national output and income, employment and inflation" to address issues of well-being and human rights of people². This would require actions including measuring the

¹ UNWOMEN ; Concept note of Expert Group Meeting in preparation of CSW 68- October2023

² Balakrishnan R., Heinz J. and Elson D. (2016), Rethinking Economic Policy for Social Justice: The Radical Potential of Human Rights, as referenced in D. Elson (2020)

value of unpaid care to the economy, increasing investment in critical social infrastructure, and ensuring universal access to affordable, quality care services.

17. To positively transform the status and condition of women, there must be a recognition of the need to review and strengthen implementation of existing policies and adopt new policies with a view to eradicate the feminisation of poverty, to promote transparency, accountability, access to timely information , so that people, including women living in poverty, can act based on knowledge of their rights.

18. To strengthen women’s organizations and platforms as meaningful spaces to mobilize power, demand accountability, bringing together the voices, expertise and lived experiences of women living in poverty.

Considering the context described above and taking into consideration the African context related to financing for development, gender equality and women’s rights, we agree to set our priorities in the following areas:

1. Take the appropriate social and political measures to address women’s poverty by:

- a. Adopting gender responsive budgeting tools and principles, increase investment in social infrastructure (health, education, social protection, etc), to strengthen women and girls’ capabilities, to reduce and redistribute women’s unpaid care and domestic work and violence against women, amongst others.
- b. Building on the principles established by the AfCFTA, ensure that trade facilitation processes are inclusive, and that women benefit from their implementation.
- c. Building sustainable and inclusive infrastructure and ensuring access to food and nutrition especially in situation of livelihood loss resulting from conflict, climate disaster and humanitarian crisis.
- d. Promoting women’s access to credit, training, skills development, and extension services at rural and urban levels in order to provide women with a higher quality of life and reduce the level of poverty among them.

- e. Supporting and enabling sex disaggregated data collection and use to inform policy and service delivery to women and girls including those with disabilities.
- f. Improving coordination within and among state institutions to enhance implementation of plans, policies and service deliveries to women and girls.
- g. Strengthening internal policies functions and practices of public institutions to address women and girls' poverty, strengthen their responses and ensure accountability, availability and affordability of Internet and digital infrastructure in rural and informal settlement.

2. Contribute to reforming the financial architecture and financial processes to be gender sensitive:

- a. Assessing financing gaps to implement anti-poverty policies and programmes from a women rights and gender equality perspective and identify different sources of financing that can be mobilised to fill the gap.
- b. Calling for reforms of international financial institutions to address gender inequality and the financial needs of women and girls living in poverty in the African continent.
- c. Enhancing International and regional cooperation to create fiscal space for social development for women and girls, including through the fulfilment of official development assistance commitments to developing countries.
- d. Analysing the various fiscal policies and options and advocating for a reform of the tax system to make them more progressive and gender responsive.
- e. facilitating women and girls' access to climate finance grants that are free of constraining conditionalities.
- f. Addressing the issue of sovereign debt through debt cancellation and the introduction of sovereign debt resolution.

- g. Stopping illicit financial flows and ensuring the return of stolen assets.
- h. Promote digital literacy, access and use of technology initiatives in trade facilitation, market access, information and knowledge management, accountability, early warning and justice systems and ensure availability and affordability of Internet and digital infrastructure in rural and informal settlement.

3. To invest in women rights institutions and organisations

- a. Strengthening and opening spaces for women and girls living in poverty to enable women organising and demanding accountability from State and non-governmental institutions operating within the jurisdiction of the respective states through established channels and platforms.
- b. Facilitating participation of women's organizations at local and national levels in discussions and decision making on policy, processes, and financing for gender equality.
- c. Improving coordination within and among public and private sector institutions to implement plans and policies for gender equality and overall sustainable development.

Adopted on 14th November 2023