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Africa CSO
Position Paper

Equal Say, share and control:
The Africa We Want



CSO FORUM DECLARATION

9TH AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE 20 YEAR REVIEW OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BDPfA)



Preamble

African women have been at the forefront of shaping the global agenda for women's rights from the 3rd World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 that resulted in the "Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies". The 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 was chaired by a prominent African woman, Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, who alongside other African women ensured that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's (BDPfA) 12 critical areas of concern reflected priorities of African women and girls.

Over the last two decades, Africa has made tremendous strides in developing progressive frameworks to advance the rights of women on the Continent. This is evident from the adoption of the gender equality principle in the African Union's (AU) Constitutive Act of 2002, the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003, and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of 2004, to mention a few. At national and regional levels, significant progress has been made in such critical areas as: girls' education, women's political participation, maternal health, adoption of action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, as well as laws and policies on violence against women, amongst others.

Nevertheless, the 20 year review of the BDPfA comes within a social, political and economic environment in which many of the gains made in 1995 are facing various threats. The following trends and challenges continue to hinder the advancement of women and girls' rights including, but not limited to: widening inequalities between the rich and poor and between men and women due to prioritization of macroeconomic policies that are driven by growth, without equitable development and respect for human rights; HIV,

maternal mortality and morbidity continue to be amongst the leading causes of death for women; increasing radical and extremist groups that pose threats to the safety, security and advancement of women and girls, as indicated by on-going abductions of girls; and the shrinking space and resources for civil society particularly those working on women's rights.

It is therefore incumbent upon us, as Africans, to re-dedicate ourselves to the commitments made in the BDPfA and other international and regional commitments on rights of women, recognizing women in all their diversities. This includes ensuring on-going processes and negotiations on Post 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Financing for Development (FfD), the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), and the Africa Agenda 2063 do not erode these commitments and that they consolidate the gains made. Reaffirming as well that the State remains the principal duty bearer of human rights obligations and this responsibility should not be shifted to other actors such as civil society, development partners or the private sector.

We, 190 representatives of civil society in our diversity from 34 countries in the 5 regions of Africa and the Diaspora, gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from November, 14 -16 2014 for the NGO Forum on the Beijing+20 Review, and building on the UNECA CSO Technical Consultation on Beijing+20 convened in October 2014, hereby recommend the following to African governments, recognizing that each organ and department of government is responsible and accountable for women's rights falling within its mandate, under coordination by the gender machineries.

Economy

- a. Design and implement macroeconomic policies that ensure equitable growth, fair distribution of opportunities and decent employment, labour standards and safe working conditions for women; and tax systems that enhance women's productivity, access to basic services and commodities, and income distribution;
- b. Recognize the contribution of unpaid care work in the economy, which falls disproportionately on women as compared to men, and invest in infrastructure and time saving technologies to reduce and redistribute its burden on women;
- c. Allocate resources for the design, collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data to monitor progress in the socio-economic development of women and girls;
- d. Enact and revise existing laws that accord women full and equal rights to land, property, technology and other productive resources;
- e. Review existing trade agreements to remove restrictions that hinder transfer, development and maintenance of technology, to enable Africa and women in particular to add more value to commodities through processing and industry, and to increase women's income in the value chain.
- f. Develop laws and policies that enhance women's corporate leadership, investment, access to credit, capacity building and information, and facilitate access to public procurement contracts for women owners of small and medium enterprises with special measures targeting women with disabilities, young women and other marginalized groups.
- g. Create an enabling environment for African women cross border traders by ensuring free movement of persons and goods, access to information and protection from coercion, harassment and violence at border crossing points.
- h. Ensure revenues generated from Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in areas such as extractives are invested in sectors such as health, agriculture, education and the elimination of violence against women, that will greatly advance the achievement of women's and girls' rights;
- i. Put a stop to the phenomenon of land leases or land grabs in the name of foreign direct investment that violate human and women's rights, and result in the dispossession and displacement of populations;
- j. Engage citizens in open governance to enhance transparency and participation of citizens, including women, in the development and implementation of policies in the extractives sector.

Agriculture

- a. Increase investment in agriculture at national level to 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), in line with the AU commitment in the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), with a focus on enhancing the capacity and skills of women small holder farmers and developing knowledge systems oriented to more productive technologies;
- b. Institute open governance measures to ensure transparency on bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements on large-scale land deals and between governments and private sector that adversely affect communal land rights that most rural women depend on;
- c. Adopt measures that lead to food sovereignty by: supporting women's capacity to produce safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable foods; promoting research in local seed systems and farming methods; protection of indigenous seed and knowledge technologies; establishment of local seed banks and ensuring access to natural resources by women farmers, fishers and pastoralists.

Environment and Climate Change

- a. Establish environmentally friendly policies and programs for climate change mitigation and adaptation and ensure women's participation in decision-making as well as their access to resources, services and knowledge, to enhance their adaptive capacities to combat the impact of climate change;
- b. Develop comprehensive gender sensitive policies that address the environmental impact of large scale mining on communities;
- c. Invest in and promote the development of alternative safe and clean energies (hydro and solar) in order to eliminate reliance on non-sustainable energy sources (kerosene and firewood) that pose high risks to people, in particular women in the home, and in the environment;

Women's Health

- a. Commit to the achievement of the right of citizens to the highest attainable standard of health, in particular the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls;
- b. Strengthen integrated and comprehensive health services and infrastructure by ensuring services are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and of quality and upgrade the quality of training for health workers at all levels,
- c. Improve retention of health workers through competitive remuneration to enable delivery of quality care and treatment for women and girls' in mental health, maternal health, reproductive cancers, comprehensive and free sexual and reproductive health services.

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

- a. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights for all women, including young women, adolescents, and women with disability, women living with HIV and other marginalized groups, by ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and comprehensive sexuality education;
- b. Repeal laws that criminalize the transmission of HIV, particularly those that single out women and other marginalized groups living with HIV, and put an end to coercive HIV testing of women, forced sterilization and abortion for women living with HIV;
- c. Remove restrictive abortion laws that have led to the deaths of over 600,000 African women and girls from unsafe abortion over the last 20 years, meaning that unsafe abortion still constitutes one of the top causes of maternal mortality in Africa;
- d. Address factors and practices that contribute to the high maternal mortality and morbidity rates in Africa such as child early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, unmet need for comprehensive family planning; unsafe abortion and violence against women and girls.


Girl Child and Young Women

- a. Create or support existing safe spaces for young women and adolescent girls, such as community based networks and groups, and create access to information and comprehensive services such as sexual and reproductive health services;

- b. Develop and implement comprehensive national legal frameworks on child early and forced marriage including a legal minimum age of marriage of 18 years, disallow judicial consent to marriage in sexual violence cases, and criminalize all forms of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- c. Adopt and enforce International Labor Organisation (ILO) Convention to protect girls against child labour.

Human Rights

- a. Accelerate measures to tackle discrimination and inequalities based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, and place of origin, cultural or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, health status, and ability, which disproportionately affect women;
- b. In collaboration with women and girls with disabilities; develop policies and structures that promote their protection and rights and improve their social and economic conditions,
- c. Act in a comprehensive and holistic manner to recognize the linkages between development, violence against women and girls; education, health, HIV and AIDS, poverty eradication, food security, peace and security, humanitarian assistance, crime prevention, and ensure access to justice for all women and girls and marginalized groups.
- d. Protect all women human rights defenders and guarantee their safety and non-persecution in line with international human rights principles and norms;
- e. Adopt and implement laws and programmes at national level to combat trafficking in women and girls, based on accurate data, in line with the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime



Women in armed conflict

- a. Fully include women's leadership and participation at all levels of decision-making in peace, reconciliation and reconstruction processes and mechanisms, in efforts to combat, reduce, and prevent armed conflict, violence and extremism;
 - b. End impunity for sexual and gender-based violence through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators;
 - c. Improve women's livelihoods through promoting access to justice and psychosocial services, and the establishment of compliant and reporting mechanisms in conflict and post-conflict situations;
 - d. Strengthen the protection and agency of women by reducing arms proliferation and military spending and reallocate military expenditure to social development, including increased financing for gender equality, women's human rights and women's economic empowerment;
 - e. Include refugee and displaced women and girls in the design, delivery and evaluation of humanitarian programmes, and strengthen their resilience by providing them with access to education, health and economic opportunities;
 - f. Expand the definition of conflict to include internal disturbances, protracted and low intensity civil strife, political strife, ethnic and communal violence, state of emergency and suppression of mass uprisings, and their impact on women's security.
- b. Encourage media outreach to communities to engage everybody, particularly women and marginalized communities, in current and topical issues;
 - c. Create policies and enabling environment that prevent the use of social media and other forms of media as instruments of violence against women and girls;
 - d. Adopt or enforce policies on freedom of information, freedom of expression and the existence of free and independent media;
 - e. Invest and leverage the use of ICT as an alternative means for the delivery of education and training particularly to women and girls.

Education

- a. Consolidate gains made in gender parity at primary school level by providing incentives such as gender responsive learning environment, including accessible and free secondary education, subsidised higher and vocational education; to promote the retention and transition of girls;
- b. Provide bursaries and other incentives to enhance girls' participation in science, technology and mathematics;
- c. End impunity for perpetrators of sexual harassment and abuse of girls in school;
- d. Promote girls' access to information and education through e-education and e-health products especially through mobile telephony.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

A multi-sectoral approach is critical, to ensure that each organ and department of government implements and is accountable for the women's rights that fall within its mandate, under coordination by the gender machineries.

Women, Media and ICTs

- a. Ensure persistent and concerted engagement of media owners to change their perception of how women's issues are covered;

"We, the 190 representatives of civil society acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Ministries of Gender and Women's Affairs despite the limited resources and overwhelming agenda. As Civil Society we re-affirm our commitment to working alongside you and other line Ministries to ensure the full achievement of the BPfA and women's rights in general in the years ahead."



CSO Consultation for Beijing 20 Review

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