

***Africa Ministerial Pre-Consultative Meeting on the Commission on the Status of Women  
Sixty First Session (CSW61) on the theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the  
changing world of work”***

**26 - 27 January 2017**

**KEY MESSAGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CSW61**

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

On January 26 and 27 2017, UN Women, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and in collaboration with the Africa Union Commission (AUC) convened the Africa Ministerial Pre-Consultation on the Commission on the Status of Women 61<sup>st</sup> Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme “*Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*”.

The meeting was attended by two hundred and thirty-five (235) participants including forty six (46) Member States represented by Ministers of Gender and Women’s Affairs, senior government officials and Ambassadors to the African Union. Also present were: senior officials from the AUC, the United Nations system, development partners and representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) including youth and young women’s organizations. The participants acknowledged and welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General’s (UNSG) commitment to achieving gender parity and enhancing regional representation in the United Nations.

The participants further affirmed and appreciated the commitments made by African Member States on Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international, regional and national policies and conventions to advance gender equality and women’s socio-economic and political rights on the continent.

The participants recognized the importance of transformational and structural changes to achieving decent work, including full and productive employment for women. They further noted the importance of establishing a conducive macroeconomic and labour-market policy environment to eliminate structural barriers, in order to create decent jobs with equal pay for equal work; recognize and compensate unpaid care work; and promote women’s entrepreneurship in the changing world of work. For these policies to be successful, Member States should strengthen their programmes on early childhood development (ECD); primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and technical education, with emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for girls and young women. These measures should be aimed at enhancing women’s access to ownership, and control over productive resources and assets.

While some progress has been made, there still remains a huge gap in achieving gender parity in the changing world of work. For example, by the end of this decade, three-quarters of employed women are expected to remain as unpaid workers on family-owned farms, or similar family-based ventures in the informal sector. This leaves them with no social protection and safety nets, nor any prospects for growth of their status from their productive activities. Without addressing these issues, the achievement of SDG 5 and its targets by 2030 will remain elusive.

Member States urged key stakeholders, including the private sector, youth, faith-based organizations, civil society and development partners to support governments to promote innovation and technology-transfer for women's economic empowerment.

Taking cognizance of the diversity among African countries, which include situations of humanitarian emergency arising from conflict, post conflict recovery, natural disasters and climate change, the meeting agreed on the following key messages to inform Africa's positioning and advocacy for CSW61 on the priority theme '*Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work*':

## **PART 2: KEY MESSAGES**

### **1. African Member States should harness the demographic dividend by investing in young women and girls, including by:**

- Developing and implementing specific measures to prevent and address all forms of violence against women and girls including harmful traditional practices; as well as preventing teenage pregnancy and ending child marriage;
- Institutionalizing the one-stop center as a good practice for responding to sexual and gender based violence;
- Ensuring safety of girls in educational facilities at all levels; promoting second chance education for girls who drop out of school prematurely; promoting STEM education and innovation training for girls; and protect their intellectual property rights;
- Closing the knowledge and skills gap affecting women and girls by leveraging technology and anticipating technological changes that negatively affect women and girls;
- Supporting young women's entry into the labour market, including through expanding their participation in tertiary education, as well as enacting appropriate labour market policies and practices such as skills training, job-search assistance and entrepreneurship development programmes;
- Ensuring girls' access to life skills training and quality reproductive health services for boys and girls with attention to HIV and AIDS;
- Promoting the participation of young people in governance, conflict prevention and peace building to curb radicalization and create a peaceful and conducive environment for young people's contribution to the economy and nation-building;
- Supporting young women's right to organize and participate at all levels;
- Developing, financing and implementing frameworks and mechanisms that give sufficient economic opportunities to young people through capacity building, access to affordable finance and entrepreneurship development;
- Establishing measures and mechanisms to make agriculture and agribusiness attractive to young people, especially young women.

**2. African Member States should develop and implement gender-responsive macro-economic policies that promote women's economic empowerment and rights, including by:**

- Adopting and implementing fiscal and labour market policies that create decent jobs, protect worker rights, promote female entrepreneurship and aim for full and equal employment for women and men;
- Fully accounting for unpaid care work and include social protection into the formulation, implementation and assessment of macroeconomic policies;
- Regulating business activities to ensure that they respect women's rights and encourage meaningful, long-term community investments to promote decent work for women;
- Establishing and enforcing legal and regulatory measures to ensure gender-responsive work environments including non-discrimination, equal pay and zero tolerance to violence in the work place;
- Ensuring that the mandates and labour policies of relevant and key sectoral Ministries include gender mainstreaming, and that they are well coordinated in order to accelerate women's economic empowerment;
- Ensuring that regional and national trade policies are aligned with the gender equality targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;
- Undertaking gender impact analysis of tax and other fiscal policies including collection and use of taxes for addressing gender and structural inequality.

**3. African Member States are encouraged to strengthen accountability mechanisms for women's economic empowerment, including by:**

- Implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment<sup>1</sup> to unlock the power of women to work and achieve financial independence;
- Taking measures to promote gender parity in the workplace especially at decision-making levels;
- Expanding efforts in collecting sex disaggregated data including on the most vulnerable women and girls to ensure evidence-based policy formulation, implementation and evaluation;
- Enforcing accountability mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to systematically support women's economic empowerment and women's rights to and at work;
- Analyzing the gendered impacts of resource allocation to fulfill Member States' commitments and obligations towards women's economic rights;
- Reviewing and strengthening laws and regulations to promote women's participation in the labour force;

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/sg-high-level-panel-on-womens-economic-empowerment>.

- Addressing the gaps in enforcement of international, regional and sub-regional legal instruments that integrate gender equality across the legal codes of African countries;
- Investing in research to inform analysis of the gendered impacts of macroeconomic policies;
- Curbing illicit financial flows and tax havens that take away resources that could be reinvested back into African economies and strengthen women's economic empowerment;
- Strengthening the capacity and funding for national gender machineries in order to enhance gender mainstreaming, monitoring and accountability in the labour market.

**4. African Member States should ensure women's full, equal and effective participation and leadership at all levels of economic and social policy decision making, including in regards to peace, security and humanitarian action, including by:**

- Enacting and enforcing labour laws that improve the bargaining power and position of women and youth in labour markets;
- Taking measures, including temporary special measures to ensure equal representation of women in economic decision-making structures and institutions including private companies, cooperatives and trade unions;
- Establishing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of quotas on the participation of women in parliament, cabinet, committees of parliament as well as upper echelons of political parties;
- Protecting women's economic, social and political rights to organize including the right to freedom of association, networking, assembly and speech both at country and continental level;
- Engaging rural and indigenous peoples and women's organizations in regional and national policy making, particularly where this pertains to investments in infrastructure, mining and extractive industries and trade in goods and services that affect the livelihoods and well-being of indigenous peoples and their ecosystems;
- Repealing laws that criminalize and limit civic space for women's organizations and citizens organizing on labour rights and women's economic rights;
- Strengthening the leadership role of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building efforts in line with National Action Plans for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security;
- Ending sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict and post conflict situations in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's commitment to end sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

**5. African Member States should ensure informed decisions and safe mobility for women locally, nationally, regionally and internationally, including by:**

- Developing and enforcing effective labour migration policies that are (i) gender responsive, (ii) protect labour rights, and (iii) promote safe and secure working environments for female migrant workers;
- Regulating the role of private intermediaries and labour brokers in migration and enforcing laws against trafficking while protecting movement of choice;
- Enhancing intergovernmental cooperation with transit and destination countries for economic migrants and cross border traders;
- Providing access to information and income generation opportunities for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees;
- Implementing global action and accountability frameworks on trafficking of women and girls, and supporting the adoption of a United Nations resolution on human trafficking;
- Ensuring increased financial allocation for the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women to cater for victims of trafficking.

**6. African Member States should establish social protection policies, and provide adequate infrastructure and public services to advance women's economic empowerment and rights, including by:**

- Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's burden of unpaid care and domestic work;
- Increasing investment in affordable and renewable energy, transport and water infrastructure to reduce the burden of unpaid work on families in general and women in particular;
- Quantifying and remunerating unpaid care work of women through enacting, revising and ensuring consistent implementation of equitable marital property rights;
- Putting in place accessible and quality care facilities for children and other dependents in the work place;
- Improving social infrastructure and extending social protection programmes, including cash transfers to reach the poorest of the poor;
- Providing social protection and enhancing labour rights for women in the informal sector, including domestic workers and the elderly;
- Documenting and sharing lessons learnt and good practices from countries that have successfully organized their informal sectors;
- Promoting transition of women from informal to formal employment in line with ILO Recommendation no. 204;
- Addressing the needs of women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities, discrimination and marginalization including women with disabilities, women caring for persons with disabilities, women living with HIV and AIDS, elderly persons, internally displaced and refugee women, to enhance their resilience.

**7. African Member States should ensure that women have access to and control over productive resources, services and markets, including by:**

- Supporting and accelerating women's right to own, access and use land, including collective and user rights to land and common property;
- Developing and financing gender-responsive strategies to prevent, mitigate and manage the impact of climate change in line with international and regional agreements;
- Regulating the extractive industry to address the impact that climate change and land degradation has on the economy and women's economic empowerment and rights;
- Investing in technology to enhance agricultural and marine economy and tourism outputs through robust value addition, access to market and cooperatives;
- Ensuring women's financial inclusion through access to financial information, financial literacy and credit;
- Eliminating discriminatory requirements for women to enable them to qualify for financial products and services;
- Ensuring women's access to time and labour-saving technologies, digital, information and communications technologies for value addition and access to markets;
- Investing in research and technology for women and girls to address the gendered digital divide and enable women to leverage technology for entrepreneurship and economic development to enhance women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work;
- Encouraging the adoption of affirmative public procurement measures, as well as increasing the share of trade in favour of women-owned businesses by both the public and private sector.

**8. African Member States should eliminate discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and stereotypes that hinder the protection and progression of women in the world of work, including by:**

- Ratifying, domesticating and fully implementing international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ILO Convention 189 (2011) on domestic workers, and the Maputo Protocol;
- Putting in place legislation and regulations to eliminate the gender pay gap and ensure equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- Eliminating discriminatory social and cultural norms that hamper women's access to full employment and decent work, impeding their economic empowerment;
- Investing in changing negative attitudes of men and boys to embracing gender equality starting at an early age using the HeForShe campaign as a vehicle to address patriarchal stereotyping during parenting;
- Strengthening partnerships between governments, religious leaders and faith-based organizations to embrace gender equality and economic empowerment of women;

- Educating workers and disseminating information on labour rights and laws.

### **PART 3: STRATEGIES FOR A UNIFIED POSITION AT CSW61 IN NEW YORK**

- Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs to share the agreed key messages with Ministers of Foreign Affairs for further dissemination with Africa Group in New York and other relevant Sector Ministries;
- AUC to convene Africa Group dialogues prior to and post CSW61 in close partnership with UN Women and UNECA offices in New York;
- Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, through the AU STC on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), to continue to convene regularly in close collaboration with the Africa Group Missions in New York during the negotiations of the CSW61 Outcome Document;
- Africa women's movement to work closely with Member States and civil society organizations (CSOs) to include the key messages in their CSO advocacy messages;
- ECA will create an online platform to share updated information on CSW61 side events and work programme which will be accessible to all African Member States, and complement the website of CSW61<sup>2</sup>;
- Africa to speak with one voice to the key messages stated in this outcome document;
- African Member States statements and presentations at CSW61 to be informed by these key messages.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017>.