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Statement submitted by African Women’s Development and Communication Network, Akina Mama Wa Afrika, Association of African Women for Research and Development, Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women, Femmes Afrique Solidarité, Servitas Cameroon and Women in Law and Development in Africa, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa welcomes the priority theme of the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women focusing on women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development including the review of the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls as per the agreed conclusions of 57th Commission on the Status of Women session and opines that addressing Women's Empowerment will positively enhance gender equality and development. The key ideas highlighted in this statement that the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa wishes to be considered are: addressing implementation gaps between laws and practice; review of policies that further impoverish women; recognition of women's labour rights; addressing women's unpaid care work; promoting women entrepreneurship; elimination of violence against women; implementation of sustainable development goals and advancing gender parity among others.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa wants to emphasize that despite the positive progress on the legislative front through the ratification of various international and regional instruments there is need to address the gaps between progressive laws and practice and/or implementation that impede the realization of women's full empowerment, gender equality and human rights of women and girls.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa further urges the international community to review economic policies that have failed to bring about inclusive growth and sustainable development that ensures the benefits of increased prosperity are shared evenly across society including between women and men of different social economic categories. We call upon governments to transform the economy towards gender, ecological, development and economic justice and human rights for all.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa calls on Governments and the international community to ensure that the trade architecture provides the flexibility for all countries and communities to adapt trade to protect the livelihoods of small-scale producers and build self-determined industries, including initially through special and differential treatment for developing countries.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa calls on governments and the international community to eradicate Illicit Financial Flows and tax havens which take away resources from developing countries to developed countries thereby compromising service delivery especially in social sectors such as education and health sectors which are mainly benefitted by women and girls. Create mechanisms that provide full public transparency and democratic control of cross-border capital flow. Such financial transparency would not merely advance tax justice but additionally protect human rights by also curtailing the activities of criminals such as money launderers and traffickers in persons, drugs and weapons.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa also notes that in spite of an expansion of employment opportunities over the past decade and significant gains in increasing girl's access to and

participation in education, African women still do not participate equally in the labour market. Addressing gender-based job segregation that tends to trap women in low-level jobs with minimal decision-making functions needs to be addressed.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa emphasizes that it is critical to reform the gendered division of labour and recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work between men and women, boys and girls, between communities and the state and the private sector.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa believes that in order to realize full empowerment of women and girls there is a need to provide women with skills and encourage them to change their approach from simply farming for subsistence to creating small, medium and big enterprises that can expand and grow. Therefore, policies and programs should go further than offering microcredits to women by providing capacity building, provision of information and knowledge services and access to technology and substantial resources

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa believes that women's empowerment is intrinsically linked to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. There is need therefore to consider the accelerated implementation of laws and policies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and violence against women and girls by ending impunity against perpetrators of violence against women and girls, criminalizing all harmful practices and traditions that perpetuate violence against women such as female genital mutilation, early/child/forced marriages, and widow inheritance and using a holistic approach which prioritize the empowerment of women and girls' victims and survivors. Specific attention should be given to the most marginalized groups of women and girls who often face multilayered forms of discrimination. These groups include but are not limited to young women and adolescents, women at the grassroots, women with HIV, women with disabilities and sexual minorities.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa further urges the international community to consider a treaty on Violence against Women; no single treaty seems to cover violence against women as a specific type of human rights violation and the protection offered to women in other treaties is deficient. There is need for general consensus that a universal, comprehensive treaty aiming at preventing and eradicating violence against women is adopted.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa proposes further that governments need to prioritize the integration of commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa considers furthermore that Gender parity in all decision making bodies and processes needs to go beyond numbers by strengthening women's voices and participation in all decision making levels of government including international bodies, and across all sectors of the economy.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa recommends that women are placed at the heart of interventions during conflict and post conflict situations. It is critical that women are substantially involved in peace negotiation processes in addition to the design and provision of humanitarian responses that specifically address the needs of women and girls.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa recommends promoting the use of gender-responsive budgeting to ensure coherence of national planning, costing and budgeting processes with gender equality objectives. Strengthened knowledge and capacity of States on gender-responsive budgeting is needed to ensure the targeted allocation, transparency, and effectiveness of adequate resources to the implementation of policies in support of gender equality. States can also use gender-responsive budgeting to monitor public expenditures and analyse the effects of fiscal, including tax policy, and monetary policies on gender equality and women's empowerment as well as to strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments.

The Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa notes the empowerment of women and girls does not only require fiscal resources but also calls for a strong political will from various stakeholders and a complete shift in norms and values that nature systemic conditions that continue to keep women and girls subjugated. Therefore as we engage in the 60th Commission on the Status of Women we call on governments and all stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of the recently adopted development framework linking it to already existing frameworks and development commitments for a truly transformed world.

This statement is submitted on behalf of the Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women/Africa by the following organizations:

African Women's Development and Communication Network

Akina Mama Wa Afrika

Association of African Women for Research and Development

Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women

Femmes Afrique Solidarité

Servitas — Cameroon

Women in Law and Development in Africa