

Oral Statement from African Women's Caucus at the 54th Commission on the Status of Women

We, the representatives of various African women's civil society organizations assembled at the Global NGO Forum for Women on Beijing +15 in New York in February 2010, and representing the voices of millions of African women, youth and girls;

Having widely consulted with different stakeholders prior to and during Global NGO Forum on the progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Africa since the last review (Beijing +10);

Having reflected on the situation of the African woman and girl in the region and reviewed the highlights of the African Women's Regional Shadow Report on Beijing +15 which incorporates national and sub-regional reviews from women's civil society organisations and networks;

Recognizing that the Beijing +15 Review process is taking place at a time of both great opportunity and challenge for African women in the realization of their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights;

Considering WITH GREAT CONCERN that although the process of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action over the last 15 years has utilized significant resources, progress has remained minimal, slow and fragmented, and has not resulted in fundamental changes in the lives of the majority of women in Africa;

We therefore call upon African leaders, development partners, the private sector and all key stakeholders in the development process to, among others, prioritize the following actions:

1. Ensure ratification with no reservations, domestication and full implementation of all key human rights instruments that secure the rights of women and girls including CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, the African Union Protocol on the rights of women, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Democracy and UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889;
2. Ensure that provisions and policies promoting the achievement of gender parity in leadership and decision making are implemented and that women are sufficiently enabled to influence culture, systems and structures of decision making institutions
3. Ensure that structures established to lead the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda have increased and significant resources as an indication of political commitment to women's advancement;
4. Increase support for African women's economic empowerment as part of the strategy to eradicate poverty;
5. Take action to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls with special attention to harmful cultural and religious practices, violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and human trafficking.

We call upon African leaders to take the opportunity of the **African Women's Decade (2010-2020)** to take leadership to significantly reduce the gaps in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action - specifically in the first three years of the Decade.