



**Africa Ministerial Pre-Consultative Meeting on the Commission on the Status of Women 61<sup>st</sup>  
Session (CSW 61)**

**26 – 27 January 2017  
Addis, Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Theme: “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work”**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**Background:**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council (Resolution 11 (II)). It is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. At each annual session, the CSW focuses on a specific priority theme to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2017-2019), the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2017 will consider **‘Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work’** as its priority theme. A report by the Secretary-General will support the Commission’s deliberations.

Building on the positive experience of coordinating a one Africa position towards the CSW sessions prior to CSW-57<sup>th</sup>, 58<sup>th</sup>, 59<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Sessions, UN Women in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) proposes to convene the pre-61<sup>th</sup> CSW Africa Ministerial meeting from **26-27 January 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**. The event takes place on the margins of the 9<sup>th</sup> AU Gender Pre-summit. Besides the priority theme, the ministerial meeting will also feature a dedicated session to discuss the review theme, from the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the CSW focusing on the challenges and achievements of the implementation of the MDGs for women and girls and how lessons learnt are being used to inform national plans for the implementation of the SDGs in Africa. The meeting also builds on and promotes Africa’s efforts to adopt a unified approach and a common agenda on gender equality and women’s empowerment to inform global platforms.

The coordination of the Africa pre-CSW consultation meeting benefits from the ongoing partnership between UN Women, AUC and ECA that catalyzes the commitment of AU Member States to the acceleration of achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development evidenced, among others, by the adoption of an African Common Position which distinctly identified Gender equality objectives. In addition, the AU Agenda 2063 reinforces the global framework by considering achievement of gender equality as a pre-condition and a key objective of continent structural transformation towards the future which African people aspire for *"an integrated, peaceful, prosperous, people centered and representing a dynamic force in the global arena"*.

### **The changing world of work globally and in Africa:**

In this changing world of work, some entrenched exclusions continue including the pronounced inequalities in labour markets. There are generally significant gender gaps between men's and women's participation in paid employment and in addition gender wage gaps prevail worldwide. Nearly one fourth of women globally are defined as unpaid workers, meaning they receive no direct pay for their work, and there is a marked and tenacious segregation of women into lower paying sectors and informal employment. Per ILO, approximately one quarter of the world's female workforce are engaged in agricultural activities in rural areas, making up more than 40 percent of all agricultural workers. In addition, over 40% of the global female labour force is concentrated in services, with women making up more than 55%. The terms and conditions of work vary greatly in services, which spans the gamut of technical and communications services, retail and petty trade, to healthcare and personal services. Yet even as service sector employment expands in the changing world of work, women remain concentrated in lower segments with lower job tenure and greater insecurity.

These global trends are even more pervasive in Africa. Gender inequality remains Africa's defining challenge with pervasive inequality in almost all development sectors including in the labor market. In all African countries, women's employment rate is lower than men's. Except for Rwanda, Malawi, Burundi and Mozambique, women's participation is estimated at 10 to 15 percent below the men's rates, with some countries displaying differences of 30-40 percent<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the 2016 ILO report<sup>2</sup> estimates youth unemployment in Africa at 10.9 per cent in 2016 with regional variations, the proportion is about 30% in North Africa.

Gender inequality in access to employment is accompanied by gender wage gaps. A UN Women study shows that gender wage gap outside agriculture is pervasive across all labour markets in sub-Saharan Africa, where, on average, the unadjusted gender pay gap is estimated at 30 per cent. This is triggered by women's unequal access to opportunities such as education and resources as well as the burden of unpaid care work which heavily restricts their free time and further propels them towards jobs with lower pay. This not have negative impact on women's economic empowerment, it also impedes the continent's ability harness fully women's potential.

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<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2014 Report "The World of Work . Developing with Jobs"

<sup>2</sup> ILO 2016 Report, " World Employment Social Outlook. Trends for Youth"

Majority of women in Africa are employed in agriculture where productivity and incomes are low. Many of those employed outside the agriculture sector are confined to the informal sector. The informal sector contributes about 55% of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP and 80% of the labour force<sup>3</sup>. The share of non-agricultural informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa is about 66 per cent of all female employment.<sup>4</sup> Though it provides an opportunity for income generation, jobs in the informal sector in Africa fail to guarantee decent work including a fair and regular income, security in the workplace and social protection for families as well as equality of opportunity and treatment. On top of that, in many countries, the lack of programmes and entitlements in areas such as paid maternal leave and childcare services hinders women's full participation and contribution to the labour market in Africa. Limited access to education and the mismatch between women's skills and those demanded by the labour market contributed to the high share of women's employment in the informal economy.

The high unemployment rate especially of the youth and women in Africa has also contributed to the high labour mobility and migration trends in and outside of Africa. In this regard, women constitute a considerable portion of the migrants in inter and intra Africa migrations. While significant number of women are migrating in search of domestic work in countries in the global north and to middle east countries are suffering from human trafficking which is a gross violation of women's human rights on the continent. Push factors such as the limited socio-economic opportunities, including the level of remuneration, and unemployment<sup>5</sup> will continue to stand out as key challenges that perpetuate irregular migration and trafficking of women and girls.

### **Positive Regional and International Policy Gains and Women's Leadership:**

Africa's socio-economic transformation, development and integration agenda is mainly anchored on the AU's Agenda 2063 and its First Ten Year Implementation Plan. Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 refers to an "*Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of its women and youth.*" The agenda clearly addresses issues such as employment creation, poverty reduction, social protection and inclusive development. In this regard, the agenda and its implementation plan further commit AU Member States to adopt strategies to tackle unemployment, income inequalities and eradicate poverty.

Other frameworks of relevance include notably the overarching blueprint for continental action on employment, social protection and inclusive development – the Ouagadougou + 10 Declaration and Plan of Action that was adopted by AU Heads of State and Government in

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/recognizing-africas-informal-sector-11645/>

<sup>4</sup> UNDP: Africa Human Development Report 2016: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-africa-human-development-report.html> (2016) P.64

<sup>5</sup> African Common Position on Migration and Development, [accessible at [http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/rcps/igad/african\\_common\\_position\\_md.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/rcps/igad/african_common_position_md.pdf)], p. 3

January 2015; the Social Policy Framework (SPF); the Social Protection Plan for the Informal Economy and Rural Workers (SPIREWORK); the Programme on Upgrading the Informal Economy; the Productivity Agenda for Africa; the Youth and Women Employment Pact; the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP); the AU Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration; the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (PCRD). The African Union frameworks specifically addressing gender equality and women's empowerment issues in employment include the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; AU Gender Policy and the African Women Decade (2010-2020). These put the employment of women and youth as a major driver and catalyst of poverty eradication and inclusive development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms the crucial importance of gender equality as both an integrated means and goal of its implementation. It offers a framework for the realization of gender equality and women's empowerment and sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, decent work for all, and equal pay for work of equal value through Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8, respectively. Together with the interconnected and mutually dependent goals and targets on ending poverty in all its forms (Goal 1), basic services (Goals 1 and 11), education and skills development (Goal 4), and infrastructure (Goal 9), this represents a comprehensive and transformative agenda for Africa's women's socio-economic empowerment.

Some gains were achieved in terms of increasing women's participation and leadership in trade unions. Evidence shows that women in Africa have played a critical role in advancing women's rights and were able to stir reforms on issues related to violence at work place, discriminatory wages, right to unionise and work place standards. However, when achieving leadership positions, women tend to be excluded from participating in core matters that require collective bargaining agreements with employers and governments participation in trade unions.<sup>6</sup> Hence, there is a need to address the gender gap in trade union leadership to ensure women's genuine participation in unions which can positively contribute to the creation and promotion of inclusive labour markets in Africa.

### **Moving Forward – A lot more Work to Advance Women's Role in the Labor Market in Africa:**

All in all, the economic costs of gender disparity in labour market in Sub-Saharan Africa is constraining the continent's achievement of its full economic potential – averaging a loss of about \$95 billion annually since 2010 in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>7</sup> Sustaining economic growth in Africa requires appropriate investment to build on progress made around human development through improved education, decent work, better health outcomes, inclusive political systems. This must be shaped by gender responsive macro-economic policies, programs that recognize women's potential as drivers of Africa's transformation agenda and addresses barriers to their full participation.

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<sup>6</sup> UNDP: Africa Human Development Report 2016: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-africa-human-development-report.html>( 2016) P.81

<sup>7</sup> UNDP: Africa Human Development Report 2016: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-africa-human-development-report.html>( 2016) P.73

More quality jobs for women, universal social protection and measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work are indispensable to delivering the sustainable development agenda, upholding and protecting the rights of women and achieving gender equality and the economic empowerment of women around the globe. Decent work, employment creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue represent integral elements of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. These high-level commitments provide African Member States with the opportunity to accelerate the economic and social transformation of the continent, by creating jobs and ensuring decent work for women and youth towards a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth path.

**The Goal and Objectives of the Africa Pre-CSW61 Meeting:**

The goal of the Africa Pre-CSW61 meeting is to build consensus among African countries around issues pertinent to gender inequality in the world of work in Africa with the view to promote an Africa Voice essential to shaping and influencing the CSW61 Agreed Conclusions.

**Objectives of the meeting are:**

- Analyse the changing world of work and its challenges and opportunities for fostering greater economic empowerment and independence for women and girls in Africa;
- Foster information, knowledge and experience sharing among Member States, Regional organisations, CSOs and UN partners on policies, programmes and initiatives that promote women’s economic empowerment and productive employment;
- Develop action-oriented recommendations that support gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 based on the commitment to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, and to the protection, promotion and realization of women’s and girls’ human and labour rights;
- Explore roles and responsibilities of governments, international organizations, the private sector, including financial institutions and pension funds, workers’ and employers’ organizations, and civil society, including women’s organizations and gender equality advocates, in shaping and influencing the world of work in Africa;
- Assess the transition from MDGs to SDGs, challenges and achievements in the implementation of SDGs for women and girls in Africa broadly, with a specific focus on the world of work to strategically inform the review theme for CSW 61;
- Consolidate an Africa common messaging and establish consensus-building on a pre-position for strategic advocacy to influence the CSW 61th Session.

**Expected outcomes:**

- An outcome document that outlines Africa Key Messages on the priority and review themes of CSW 61.

- An agreement on a coordinated Africa Strategy for influencing the Agreed Conclusions using the Africa Key Messages as adopted in Addis Ababa, in the spirit of **“ONE Africa ONE Voice @CSW61”**
- A comprehensive report of the two- day meeting which member States could be used to support further action and advocacy at national and international levels.

**Format of the Meeting:**

The meeting will meet in plenary informed by an expert presentation on the priority theme which will provide the framework for discussions. Two High Level Ministerial Round Table debates will provide policy makers to debate and come up with recommendations to address the challenges of inequality in the changing world of work. The consultations also feature a moderated panel on the review theme and its linkage with the priority theme. In addition, group discussions informed by clear guiding questions will be the basis for development of the Africa key messages towards CSW 61 Agreed Conclusions.

**Participants:**

This High Level Ministerial Meeting will bring together representatives of AU Member States including Ministries of Women’s Affairs, other relevant sector ministries including Ministries of Labor and Social Welfare, Permanent Representatives to the AU, the AUC, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional CSO representatives, UN agencies, experts on the theme and representatives from UN Women Regional and Country Offices.

**Working languages:**

The meeting will be conducted in English and French languages.

**Logistical arrangements:**

The meeting will be hosted by the UNECA. UN Women and UNECA will work together to provide all logistical arrangements for the meeting including covering the extra days DSA (considering that these will have attended the AU organized Gender Pre-Summit taking place from 24 – 25 January 2017) for participating Ministers of Gender and one expert from each AU Member State. All other participants are expected to take care of their costs for both travel and DSA.

**Documentation:**

Working documents including concept note, agenda and other background documents will be shared with participants electronically ahead of the meeting in both English and French.