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**Banjul Declaration on the Strategies for Accelerating
the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms
for Action**

From Commitment to Action

We, African Ministers Responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs, meeting in Banjul (Gambia) from 19 to 20 November 2009 for the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action under the overall theme "From Commitment to Action";

Building on the 1999 and 2004 reviews of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action which led to the adoption of subregional and national action plans to redress gender imbalances, and which emphasized the need for gender-sensitive, participatory and inclusive poverty reduction strategies and the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, with emphasis on the definition, development and implementation of legal and policy frameworks;

Acknowledging the progress that has been achieved, in particular in women's representation in decision-making, and gender parity in education;

Endorsing the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action made by the expert session held from 16 to 18 November 2009 in Banjul, The Gambia during the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 15), which confirm that progress in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern has been uneven;

Inspired by international, regional and subregional declarations, protocols and conventions, including the 2000 Millennium Declaration, which aim to promote and strengthen women's empowerment and accelerate the attainment of gender equity and equality as part of overall human rights;

Recognizing the interrelationships among gender equality, women's empowerment, human rights, economic growth and sustainable development;

Further recognize the Meeting of the African Union experts responsible for gender and women's affairs and take note of outcomes of the African Women's NGOs Consultative Meeting held on the margins of the Eighth African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 15);

Concerned that new challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation; food and energy crises; financial and economic crises; and the feminization of trafficking and migration can negatively affect the progress made;

Recognizing that progress towards gender equality, gender equity and women's empowerment can be achieved by addressing the structural and root causes of gender inequality through the enactment and enforcement of constitutional and legal instruments, taking into account the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other international, regional and subregional instruments such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development;

Convinced of the need to establish and strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and budgeting in all policies and programmes, rooted in a human-centred vision of development and the promotion and protection of women's human rights;

Affirming the critical importance of the principles, objectives and goals of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for women's advancement, gender equality, gender equity, sustainable development and poverty eradication in Africa, which will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

Stressing the importance of committed and effective leadership at all levels and the role of women and men in promoting the required changes in attitudes, behaviours and practices that limit women's and girls' rights, capabilities and access to opportunities;

Encouraging the regional economic communities and other subregional statutory organs to be fully engaged in the implementation and monitoring of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action;

Appreciating the importance of establishing partnerships with all stakeholders, including ministries of finance and economic planning and other line ministries, civil society, the private sector, workers' organizations, community and religious leaders, research and academic institutions, local governments, the media, the international community, and men and boys, and calling upon them to further support national efforts to address the critical areas of concern of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and to consider women as a strategic driving force;

1. *Emphasize* our commitment to fully implement international, regional and subregional agreements and initiatives whose objectives are in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action and the Millennium Development Goals;

2. *Are committed* to renewing and intensifying our resource mobilization efforts, improving national strategies, and enhancing institutional, financial and human resources in order to accelerate the achievement of the goals of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action as well as the Millennium Development Goals between now and 2015;

3. *Are committed* to focusing our actions on the following strategic areas:

1. Economic empowerment of women through poverty reduction, employment creation, social protection and use of information and communications technology:

1.1 Promote the sustainable economic empowerment of women by ensuring and reinforcing their right and access to timely and relevant information, training, ownership and control of productive resources; promoting entrepreneurship; creating employment opportunities for women through skills and business development and enhanced employability; and improving the agricultural productivity of rural women by providing them with advanced and appropriate technologies.

1.2 Nurture the economic independence of women from an early age by adopting a holistic approach and ensuring that young women, in particular those with disabilities, have access to secondary and tertiary education and professional training, including access to information and communications technology, and science and technology; using incentives and social protection measures to reduce the dropout rate among girls, particularly poor girls and pregnant adolescents; and

protecting the girl-child from violence and early and forced marriage.

- 1.3 Develop and strengthen monitoring, evaluation and information systems, as well as capacities for analysing linkages between gender and economic development by focusing on sex-disaggregated data collection, production, analysis and dissemination; and undertaking studies on the formal, informal and agricultural sectors.

2. Peace, security and development

- 2.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan that will include domestication of relevant international and regional resolutions and protocols, including United Nations Security Council resolutions S/RES/1325 (2000), S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), and S/RES/1889 (2009) on women, peace and security; advocacy for change using the media and traditional communication channels; reform of legal and judicial systems and security institutions; research; and adoption of an early warning system;
- 2.2 Promote capacity-building and peer-learning in conflict prevention and resolution, and in human rights protection and promotion for government officials, parliamentarians, women, men, youth, media, security services, the judiciary, and community leaders;
- 2.3 Adopt measures such as the provision of psychological support and the creation of reparation and compensation funds to secure the full reintegration and rehabilitation of victims; promote the effective reintegration of ex-combatants; strengthen protection and assistance to women refugees, internally displaced women and children, and female returnees; and protect girls and women from trafficking.

3. Violence against women

Adopt and implement a multi-sectoral plan to address gender-based violence, within the framework of the United Nations Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women and Girls" campaign, with particular emphasis on its Africa component, and underpinned by the following actions:

- (i) Enactment and strengthening of laws to address violence against women; social mobilization, including the launching of zero-tolerance campaigns; literacy, including legal and functional literacy for women and men, as well as education for girls and women; partnership with civil society; provision of social support and compensation to victims of violence; creation and/or strengthening of networks of women lawyers; provision of psychological support to women affected by violence; and targeted actions for men and boys to act as agents and partners of change.
- (ii) Capacity-building, including the training of law enforcement agents and health services personnel for the effective application and enforcement of relevant laws and policies; provision of adequate support to social welfare institutions, the

police and the judiciary; enhanced outreach services, especially at the community level; and sensitization of parliamentarians.

- (iii) Integration of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into subregional and national action plans based on in-depth studies of the structural causes of violence against women. Development of relevant indicators and set baseline as well as undertake national prevalence surveys to assist in measuring progress and ensuring accountability.

4. Representation and participation of women in all areas of decision-making

- 4.1 Adopt and implement affirmative action measures, notably quotas for gender parity, and set up institutional mechanisms supported by adequate resources to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, as provided for in international, regional and subregional instruments, and underpinned by constitutional guarantees and legislative provisions on gender parity.
- 4.2 Reform the electoral systems and internal leadership selection procedures of the public sector and political parties/organizations, in order to increase women's participation; encourage private sector institutions to become more gender-responsive, and promote gender parity in leadership and decision-making.
- 4.3 Develop capacity enhancement programmes to transform negative socio-cultural attitudes and perceptions towards female leadership; strengthen networking and collaboration among women's groups; and enhance inter-generational communication.
- 4.4 Ensure responsibility and accountability at the highest level of leadership, in both the public and the private sectors, using monitoring and evaluation systems such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, when applicable, and involving the media and civil society.
- 4.5 Foster and enhance solidarity among women to support women running for office at local, national, regional and global levels.

5. Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

- 5.1 Strengthen health systems with measures and incentives to retain medical personnel; avoid the brain drain; train middle-level health providers; facilitate their presence in rural areas; promote sexual and reproductive health services in order to better address the consequences of unsafe abortions; and provide sex education and services for the sexual and reproductive health of the youth;
- 5.2 Reduce maternal mortality by two thirds by 2015 through effective and coordinated community management of pregnancy-related interventions and increased availability of emergency obstetric care services and skilled attendance during pregnancy, delivery, and post-delivery, as underscored by the 2009 African Union Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA);

- 5.3 Reposition reproductive health including family planning as a development priority in order to increase access to family planning, especially in rural areas, based on culturally sensitive approaches, community mobilization and men's engagement; and ensure that adequate budgets are available to sustain and expand maternal and child health and family planning services, as well as the prevention of obstetric fistula and early detection of reproductive cancers at all levels of health-care delivery systems;
- 5.4 Mainstream gender into integrated maternal and child health services, including sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS programmes, to address the vulnerability of women and girls, ensure their access to prevention, treatment and care, and facilitate access to and use of female and male condoms.

6. Climate change and food security

- 6.1 Develop gender-responsive policies on climate change which focus on agriculture, water resource management, energy, forest use and management, as well as transportation and technology transfer for improved food security.
- 6.2 Develop agricultural policies and programmes that address the differentiated impacts of climate change, in particular the impact on women.
- 6.3 Support the integration of gender into existing and upcoming scientific research on climate change with a particular focus on the collection and use of sex- and gender-disaggregated data, and the development of knowledge-sharing and peer-learning networks at subregional and regional levels.
- 6.4 Call on the upcoming Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change to take full account of gender dimensions and come up with gender-responsive measures.

7. Financing for gender equality

- 7.1 Institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting aligned with national development priorities and poverty reduction programmes, to support the financing of gender equality at subnational and national levels.
- 7.2 Develop financing mechanisms, including alternative sources of funding, and ensure the allocation of funds at subnational and national levels; establish a stimulus package that targets women; and monitor the effective utilization and impact of financing on gender equality.
- 7.3 Develop capacity-building programmes for the training and mentoring of parliamentary and government authorities on gender-responsive budgeting.
- 7.4 Strengthen national gender mechanisms by transforming gender focal points into gender teams that perform planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring functions for the mainstreaming of gender equality into all activities of ministries at subnational and national levels.

In undertaking the above actions:

- (i) We call on our Governments to allocate adequate resources to accelerate the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.
- (ii) We call on our international partners, both bilateral and multilateral, including organizations of the United Nations system, to provide adequate technical and financial support for our development efforts and to move swiftly to implement their commitments from the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness.
- (iii) We call on the African Union Commission, the United Nations system, the African Development Bank and the Regional Economic Communities to strengthen their coordination and harmonization processes with regard to the implementation of the priorities identified in this Ministerial Declaration, including that of facilitating South-South collaboration and exchange of experiences and best practices.
- (iv) We further call on the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to annually monitor and report on progress made in implementing the relevant development programmes and plans, and to ensure that the follow-up to the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action is included in the work plan of the Committee on Women and Development of the Economic Commission for Africa.
- (v) We call on the United Nations Secretary-General to swiftly implement General Assembly resolution A/RES/63/311 related to the establishment of a new gender entity through the consolidation of four entities, namely the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), to enable countries to receive the necessary technical and financial support to achieve gender equality.

In preparation for the 20th anniversary of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, we will assess the implementation of these two instruments, taking into account any relevant procedures that will be established.

We pledge to implement these commitments in order to achieve our development goals within the next five years.