SAFEGUARDING OUR GAINS: AFRICAN WOMEN’S COLLECTIVE ACTION ON DEFINING THE PATHWAY TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND AFRICA AGENDA 2063

KEY PRIORITIES
NAIROBI, KENYA: 3rd to 4th May 2017

The African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) convened over 190 African women’s rights organization representatives from 34 African countries in Nairobi, Kenya, for the first and biggest pan-African women’s conference since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. The convening comes at a time when gender gains, underpinned by the ratification to international treaties and conventions on gender equality by African governments, continue to be eroded.

During the conference, African women’s rights organizations and movements embarked on the development of a strategic roadmap geared towards safeguarding and cultivating gender equity gains. African women’s movements intend to ensure that women and girls are at the centre of the effective follow-up, and monitoring and implementation of the SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063.

In this regard, the Nairobi convening identified a set of 6 priorities to collectively embark on over the next few years.

1. Accountability to Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality

We recognize that all the SDGs, with their goals, targets and indicators, are interrelated and important to achieve gender equality and empowerment of African women and girls. However, we distinguish SDG 5, with its focus on the reduction of gender inequality as central to the attainment of all the other SDG goals.
As part of our responsibility to holding African government’s accountable to delivering on their global commitments, we call for all SDGs and the entire 2030 agenda to be aligned to Africa Agenda 2063, as well as other gender and human rights frameworks already in existence, such as CEDAW, The Beijing Platform for Action, and the Universal Periodic Review and the Maputo Protocol.

We foreground the role of the women’s Organisations, networks and movements in the voluntary national reporting processes, as well as other regional and global forums to ensure themes and issues are discussed in a gender transformative way, and harmful policy decisions are avoided.

2. Financing for SDGs

The African High Level Panel (HLP) states that ‘Africa is losing approximately $50 billion annually through IFFs’. Because of their scale and negative impact, the issue has become an urgent matter of concern regarding Africa’s development. FEMNET is committed to continue to take leadership in mobilising African women’s rights organisations to collectively push this agenda on the continent. We call for the stop of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs), the establishment of a global tax body and call for an increase in research on how gender inequality is made worse through IFFs.

Losses through IFFs aggravate gender inequality; reduce spending on social services like maternal health, care work, girl child education, etc. We call on all governments to stop IFFs, and call for the establishment of a global tax body that is adequately resourced and meaningfully inclusive.

We call for progressive tax systems that increase taxes on the wealth, capital and profits of the rich; and an end to tax secrecy and tax havens, domestic resource mobilisation and gender responsive budgeting. This will ultimately and effectively reduce poverty and legitimately provide funding for government development plans including gender mainstreaming.

We note the active interest of the private sector in the Sustainable development agenda and call for Governments to put in place mandatory rules and accountability mechanisms that ensure that private sector private sector compliance with human rights, including women’s and indigenous people’s rights and protection of the environment.

3. Cross-Sectional Movement Building - diversity and organising

We are committed to harnessing the Pan African Women’s rights movement that uses cross-sectional and power analysis of social inequalities. We will harness collective action to powerfully agitate for substantive gender equality and equity from the grassroots up, using inclusive methodologies as put forward by the Leave No One Behind Agenda to embrace diversity at individual, thematic and institutional levels. We believe that lack of social justice in one area is absence of it completely.

We shall cultivate a collective voice towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Africa Agenda 2063 for sustainable development (SDGs) even as we work in different sectors, countries, and spaces, as we are all agitating for the same goal.

Despite the erosion of gains made in gender advocacy, we are determined to collaborate more strongly and increase our power as African women through collective action and strategic alliances with and cross like minded human rights movements.
4. Data collection and accountability

To effectively monitor and measure progress in gender equality and Women’s Rights commitments made at different levels including the Gender specific goals and targets under 2030 agenda and Africa Agenda 2063 as the newest development frameworks. We commit to, and call for, increased and meaningful data capture that is inclusive of girls and women’s voices, experiences and realities to impact policy making and legislation. We call for increased citizen participation in the collection and use of this data which in turn will work to building a strong data ecosystem.

We agitate for evidence-based decision making based on robust, African-driven and gender sensitive data collection and analysis by national institutions responsible for the development of such data sets in meaningful engagement with women’s rights organizations.

We will use different data sources and types that leverage of the digital age to push for a data revolution that will enable effective monitoring and tracking of SDGs implementation at grassroots, national, regional and international levels.

We urge states to efficiently fund and produce timely, robust, inclusive, user-driven, and disaggregated data that measures dimensions of the lives of women and girls for public good and inclusive development. This will include quantitative and qualitative data (case-study and story development) that document women’s experiences and lived realities.

We call for a critical mass and community of African women data collectors to build ownership of data, use feminist analysis and tools and optimize decision making that is grounded in our reality.

5. The Fight against Inequality

We recognize that women are a non-homogenous group on the basis of gender identity, class, sexual orientation, spatial (rural, urban), age, ability, religion etc and we push for intersectional equity and equality.

The same market fundamentalism ideology that creates the gap between the richest and the rest also relies on, and further entrenches patriarchy - it undermines the rights of women, achieving economic development off the back of low wages and poor working conditions that discriminate against women worldwide.

Women workers are the lowest-paid, and face precarious and dangerous jobs, unprotected by labour laws in a world that yields billions for the global economy. Rather than recognizing, protecting and rewarding their economic contribution, market fundamentalism hits women and girls hardest by stripping away policies like paid maternity leave, childcare, social security and free health and education.

We call for a fair wage economy that provides a living wage for care work, and social, and economic policies that invest in and protect women and girls. We call for fair distribution of opportunities and decent employment for women and an end to economic slavery of women and girls in the work place.

We call for new economic model that realigns economic benefits to the interests of people, and to peace and democracy.
6. Protect women’s rights, democratic rights and civic space in the face of growing inequality

The rapid rise of inequality crushes democracy. Collusion between political and economic elites erodes the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in Africa, and civil society freedoms are increasingly being violated around the world, and civil society space is increasingly shrinking.

In this context, violence against women and girls, hate speech, physical attacks, disappearances and assassinations are increasingly common. The right to choice and bodily integrity and access to comprehensive sexual reproductive health and rights is under threat. Citizens, who speak truth to power, challenge authoritarianism, market fundamentalism and women human rights defenders are suffering vilification and stigmatization, arbitrary detention and criminalization.

Following from the Beijing +20 Africa Regional Shadow report commissioned by FEMNET in 2014, the closure of space affects women’s rights organization through shrinking and fragmented funding streams, closure of frontline domestic violence centres, shifts away from women’s rights by states in favour of norms that centre “family values”. Further, violent extremism and religious fundamentalism are increasing states rationale for shrinking civic space. Together, these are all key concerns that need to be addressed.

Ensure women’s meaningful participation and contribution to regional policy and advocacy spaces to advance African women’s collective leadership for equality, peace and sustainable development in forus such as the High Level Political Forum on SDGs, African Forum on Sustainable Development, EU- Africa Summit and Global South Women’s Forum on Sustainable Development among others.

We call for governments to safeguard, and protect the rights of all women to freely speak out, organize and take action. We call for governments to address an end to legislation that prevents civil society holding governments accountable.

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