



**Statement to the African Union Ministerial Meeting  
STC on Women, Gender and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)**

***Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: African Union Guidelines on Gender- Responsive Responses to COVID-1***

**29 April 2020, Virtual Meeting.**

**Presented by**

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Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, the African Union Representatives, GIMAC colleagues and representative of civil society.

These is unprecedented times that demand extraordinary courage, boldness and interventions. COVID19 is a gendered pandemic in Africa,

I am pleased to address this meeting on behalf of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) together with my colleague Juliette Kimotho of FAWE. I live in rural Zimbabwe, were internet is a luxury and only yesterday we had the first confirmed case of COVID19 in our Murewa District. I am your African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage, and each day we have reports and cases of this abuse.

The GIMAC platform enables us from across the continent to bring these lived realities into our continental policy platform for common solution, so that we can SCALE UP intervention, and we can innovate with the Africa resources and reality. As GIMAC we therefore appreciate this invitation to participate this STC Meeting, and we are always grateful to the Women Gender and Development Directorate for reaching out to the voices of civil society.

We also want to recognise the other sterling efforts of mandate holders especially Mme BinetaDiop, AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security who is urging belligerents to silence the guns and encouraging all our responses to prioritise women, girls and children in displaced and refugee

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camps. We applaud her leadership. We also appreciate the Youth Envoy, Aya Chebii who has been mobilising the voice of young people including GIMAC to be on the front line of response.

The African Centre for Disease Control (CDC Africa) was born at a time we needed such solid continental leadership to drive the continental response for such health challenges such as we find ourselves with COVID 19. We welcome the continental efforts including the development of guidelines for mainstreaming gender.

We make the following broad recommendations for the continental response to COVID19, building on our robust and clear experiences as a continent from Ebola and the HIV and AIDS Crisis, where we trailblazed innovations for gendered response and for protection of women's rights. We make the following broad observations and recommendations:

1. **Beyond Vulnerability to Leadership of African women.** Women are decision makers, scientists, innovators, front line health workers, community care givers and communicators. The Africa response must harness the total capacity of women, young women and girls as a resource for the prevention, control and management of COVID 19.
2. **Resourcing and Funding must be gender responsive.** As GIMAC we support the continental effort to mobilise resource and the multiple streams of effort i.e. Africa Funds, reaching out to philanthropists and appointment of a strong team for international engagement. As STC we urge your voice to these macro efforts debt moratorium, and for such fund to reach communities through gender budget principles that we have long applied in the continent.
3. **Social Protection Measures.** In many countries, women and girls are feeling the pressures of this infection control measure. We recommend that as STC you draw on the Africa position paper you prepare for CSW34 on Social protection and adapt to this context, and especially focus on women farmers, informal traders and care work.
4. **Maintain essential services especially for the most vulnerable girls and boys.** These include school meal collection services or cash transfers to replace school feedings, and girls' access to menstrual hygiene products. This could help prevent girls from poorer households resorting to paid and risky work to supplement family incomes.
5. **Protection of women in care work and provision of personal protection equipment.** This is crisis in many of our countries and communities. Women's lives are at risk as front line workers, and community care givers. They are responding with nothing, except prayers and their hearts full of empathy. Its really painful to see the fear everyday in our sisters on the frontline.
6. **Crisis of Gender based violence, sexual exploitation and child marriage.** This is a critical pandemic of its women compounded by lockdown and also increasing risks to infection. We recommend STC to adopt a clear statement on this issue that can reinforce the UN position and also offer guidance to our countries and communities.
7. **Give attention to conflict countries** and women and girls in the camps and champion ceasefires is missing, pls add that since the yearly theme on silencing the guns. Implement

the Call to Action in the Statement issued by the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security on COVID19.

8. **Call for Strong collaboration and financial support with women's networks and youth groups, and women's funds on the continent.** There is significant work already happening such as FEMNET which has launched an information hub, the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) engaged in advocacy, and many other organisations as will be shared, such as the African Leadership Forum, FAWE, FAS, Rozaria Memorial Memorial Trust as well as women's funds such as African Women's Development Fund and Urgent Action Fund.

I am pleased to inform you that I was recently appointed as a member of the External Advisory Group to the IMF Managing Director. As I serve on that role I will carry with the voices and experiences of women through GIMAC and am available for your support and insights.

Thank you, and I now invite Juliet to share some concrete work GIMAC is undertaking in various countries and in diverse range of areas.