

**African Women's Caucus Position Statement**  
**57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**  
***Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls***

The African Women's Caucus representing African civil society organizations from all the five sub-regions of Africa and the diaspora committed to advancing women's human rights, **call on Member States to declare zero tolerance of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls** and to prioritize preventive measures in the fight to eliminate violence from the lives of women and girls.

Women's Human Rights are non-negotiable and in this regard, we reaffirm the commitments made by UN Member states in the Beijing Platform for Action; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the United Nations General Assembly Resolution to Ban Female Genital Mutilation; United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its supporting resolutions; and those reflected in African regional instruments such as the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. We therefore **call on all Member States to match these commitments with national action plans where they do not exist, gender-responsive budgets, evidence-based research, time-bound targets and indicators as a matter of urgency**. Violence against women and girls constitutes a gross human rights violation and should be duly elevated to crisis status so that it is addressed with urgency.

We are deeply concerned that in 2003 during the CSW47 member states failed to arrive at Agreed Conclusions on this specific issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G). There was a repeat of this situation in 2012 when the CSW56 Session ended without Agreed Conclusions on the theme of Rural Women that was of great relevance to African women. Furthermore, **we are greatly concerned that some member states make attempts to go back on commitments already made on the rights of women and girls by recalling rather than reaffirming** their commitments to full implementation. We however, commend member states that have recognized that women's human rights are non-negotiable and have moved progressively.

**Discrimination and inequality, which are the root causes of violence against women and girls, must be addressed** in order to end this global challenge through the **engagement of men and boys**, as well as **traditional and religious leaders** amongst other strategies. Only by addressing the root causes will women and girls reach their full political, social and economic potential.

Manifestations of VAW/G including **harmful traditional, customary and contemporary practices such as child, early and forced marriages; female genital mutilation; torture; intimate partner and domestic violence; rape; trafficking; and violence in the media must end now**.

Factors that perpetuate VAW/G such as increasing militarization including **the proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons must be curbed**.

We call on Member States to embed issues of **gender equality and violence prevention in school curriculums from early childhood level**. We call on our leaders to ensure that

**women participate fully in all sectors and decision-making spaces.**

Survivors have a right to regain their **bodily integrity and autonomy**. We urge Members States **to strengthen multi-sectoral services** and responses to violence against women and girls, including **provision of services to secure their sexual and reproductive health and rights**, psychosocial counseling and support, as well as long-term assistance and reparations.

We remain deeply concerned and stand in solidarity with all of our sisters in conflict zones globally with particular regard to those in DRC, Mali, Central African Republic, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Women's full and effective participation in peace building processes is critical for prevention, mitigation and a durable end to conflicts. We are further concerned that women continue to be excluded from formal peace negotiation processes. Therefore, we strongly urge member states to **maintain specific reference to UNSC Resolution 1325 and supporting resolutions and commit to their full implementation**.

We call on Members States to ensure that peace agreements tackle the issue of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and to ensure that **perpetrators are brought to justice and impunity is dealt with decisively**.

We further call for the recognition and protection of **those who defend the rights of women and women human rights defenders**.

We strongly recommend that the elimination of violence against women and girls be reflected as a priority area in the **post-2015 development framework**.

**We strongly support the Addis Ababa Declaration of the Africa Ministerial Preparatory Meeting for CSW57 and urge African Member States to use it as a basis for their negotiations** to reach Agreed Conclusions on this critical priority theme of the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of CSW towards the well-being and prosperity for women, girls and society as a whole.