

REGIONAL OVERSIGHT MECHANISM OF THE PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND THE REGION

REPORT OF THE ADVISORY BOARD OF THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM JOINT SOLIDARITY MISSIONS TO SOUTH SUDAN, BURUNDI, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

(ORIGINAL ENGLISH V1 05/09/2018)

EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. At the 8th Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) held on 19 October 2017 in Brazzaville, the Heads of State and Government directed the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (O/SESG-GL), in consultation with the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Secretariat, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to review progress in the implementation of the Goma Declaration (2016).
2. In pursuit thereof, and at the initiative of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the expanded Advisory Board of the Women's Platform of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework, comprising high-level women representatives from AU FemWise-Africa, ICGLR and the United Nations as well as representatives from civil society and youth, met in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2018 and committed to undertake joint solidarity missions to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325¹.
3. These solidarity missions jointly organized by the O/SESG-GL, the AU, ICGLR and UNWOMEN were undertaken in South Sudan 3-4 July; Burundi 9-12 August; the Central African Republic (CAR) 13-15 August, and; the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) 16-19 August 2018. The missions involved members of the Advisory Board, namely the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes, Said Djinnit, the two Co-Chairs of AU FemWise-Africa, H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, former Interim President of CAR, and H.E. Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe Wandira, former Vice President of Uganda; Ms. Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on WPS; Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, former Executive Secretary of ICGLR; Dr. Attiat Mustafa Abdelhalim Ahmed, Chair of the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum; and Ambassador Eliane Mokodopo, ICGLR Executive Secretariat Gender, Women and Children Programme Director.
4. The mission to South Sudan was co-led by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohamed and AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, with the participation of Special Envoy Said Djinnit, among others.
5. The objectives of the missions were to: (i) express solidarity with women in the Great Lakes region; (ii) strengthen women's coalitions and support their meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions; (iii) raise awareness among political leaders of the need for women's participation in democratic processes and socio-economic

¹ [Resolution \(S/RES/1325\)](#) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000 reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.

development, and; (iv) bring attention to the issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and abuse against women, and the need for accountability and measures to address human rights violations.

6. This report outlines the key findings and recommendations of the solidarity missions.

SOUTH SUDAN

7. From 3-4 July 2018, a UN-AU high-level delegation, co-led by the UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed and the AU Special Envoy for WPS, visited South Sudan. The delegation noted the strong message of South Sudanese women on their concerns and expectations to advance the WPS agenda. The women expressed the need to play a substantive role in support of and participation in the political process, as well as for their increased representation in the state transitional institutions, including the judiciary. They specifically requested that one Vice President position be allocated to a woman in the new Agreement. They further emphasized the need for their rights to be respected and for punitive measures to be taken against the perpetrators of violence. The delegation welcomed the development of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, and encouraged the South Sudanese women to strengthen their networks, speak with one voice, join political parties and build on the existing 25% quota towards achieving equal representation.

BURUNDI

8. From 9-11 August 2018, H.E. Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe Wandira, led the solidarity mission to Burundi, accompanied and supported by the former Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, the Chair of ICGLR Women's Regional Forum, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNWOMEN, the Office of the UN SESG for Burundi, and the O/SESG-GL. In Bujumbura, consultations were held with the President of the Republic, the First Lady, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers (Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender, Minister for Justice and, Minister for Education, as well as the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Youth), and political parties. The mission also held working sessions with representatives of women groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), the diplomatic community, the media, as well as representatives of youth and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. The mission acknowledged the positive developments in the country in relation to security and the return of refugees through the tripartite arrangement involving the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania, and UNHCR. The mission also noted the adoption of a National Gender Policy and a 5-year National Action Plan to support its implementation, as well as the adoption of a law in 2016 on the prevention and repression of SGBV and the protection of victims. On the upcoming elections in 2020, the delegation welcomed the agreement reached with women's associations and CSOs to establish a network to prepare a strategy to increase women's political participation, including through the revision of the electoral code, review targets and strategies to ensure the mobilization of women at grass root level, and develop partnerships with the youth and political parties in order to improve synergy and build coalitions. The mission also noted the commitment by the Government to raise the current 26% parliamentary representation to 30% in-line with the Constitution.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

9. From 12-15 August 2018, the Co-Chair of AU FemWise-Africa, H.E. Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe Wandira, led the solidarity mission to CAR, accompanied and supported by the former Executive Secretary ICGLR, ICGLR Executive Secretariat, MINUSCA and the O/SESG-GL. While in Bangui, the delegation met the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Promotion of

Women, Family Affairs and Children, the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court, the First Vice President of the National Assembly, women leaders and parliamentarians, the former transitional President, representatives of political parties, religious leaders, as well as representatives of the international community, including the AU Representative to the CAR, the senior leadership team for MINUSCA, and the UN Country Team.

10. The dire situation of women, with high levels of poverty, limited access to basic services and insecurity, was recognised. In this regards women's groups called for a CAR women's conference to contribute to the stabilization of the country and a support program to strengthen women's leadership. Despite provisions for gender parity, including legislation promoting 35 % of female representation, and the current revision of the electoral code in favour of gender parity, women remain under-represented in elected and public offices. In addition, the absence of women's representation in the ongoing African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation was also noted with regret. A new narrative and a strategy that brings together women organizations, the government, and partners that focuses on human security and on promoting the central role of women in all fields and sectors of socio-economic and political life across the country was agreed is urgently required.

11. The mission highlighted the importance of supporting women's leadership and capacities to engage in the political and peace processes from the grassroots' level. It further called for programmes to enhance women's educational and socio-economic opportunities, including through the creation of a dedicated Women's Fund. It noted the commitment of the country's leadership to promulgate the law on gender parity, and to promote increased participation of women in the peace process and at different levels of the administration. It also welcomed the ongoing work to review the electoral code and the willingness of some of the political parties to revise their statutes to guarantee equal opportunities to women to run for elected offices.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

12. From 16-19 August 2018, H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, led the solidarity mission to the DRC accompanied and supported by the former Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, and representatives of the ICGLR Executive Secretariat and Women's Regional Forum, UNWOMEN, MONUSCO, and the Office of the SESG-GL. While in Kinshasa, the mission met with several senior representatives, including the President of the National Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and Security, the Minister of Gender Affairs, and the Minister of Justice. They also had separate engagements with the Vice-Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), women leaders/associations and representatives of civil society and political parties, religious and traditional leaders, as well as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for MONUSCO. Prior to departing the DRC, the head of delegation also briefly met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President of CENI, and had a telephone conversation with the President of the Republic, as he was away from the country.

13. The joint mission was seen as long overdue and received strong support by all actors as an excellent opportunity to advocate for the status of women in the DRC and their full participation in the electoral process. While the mission noted progress in the electoral process in relation to compliance with the Constitution, it identified sociological, cultural, legal and financial barriers to women's political participation in the ongoing political process. To this end, the mission appealed to the legislature to consider legal reforms and address discriminatory measures against women and minorities. Concerns about the electronic voting system were also brought to the attention of the mission. The delegation encouraged the CENI and political actors to engage in a constructive conversation on this critical issue and to continue promoting awareness and intensifying civic education. The mission also noted the vital role of the media in advancing women's causes and called on the media to redouble their efforts to

ensure that women's voices are heard. The mission noted the security and humanitarian challenges across the country and the impact of conflict on women, particularly in rural areas, and emphasized the need to build the capacity of grassroots women and youth at the local level to improve their socio-economic conditions and enable them to better realize their role as transformers of society.

14. The mission noted the invitation extended to the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform to send a delegation to observe the upcoming National elections in the DRC, scheduled for 23 December 2018.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

15. The ROM provides a key high-level platform for decision making to advance the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the Goma Declaration (2016). While progress on the WPS agenda has been registered in many areas, challenges persist relating to gender sensitivity, the lack of women's participation at all levels of governance, compliance with international laws on the rights and protection of women and girls, and the need to increase the role of women in decision making, especially in peace and political processes.

16. Further to the conclusions from the solidarity missions, the high-level delegations dispatched to Burundi, Central African Republic, the DRC and South Sudan wish to submit the following recommendations for consideration by Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes Region:

- a. Ensure women's protection against SGBV and domestication of relevant ICGLR protocols.
- b. Adherence to a minimum of 30% women's quota within the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary to set an example to the wider society on the importance of the advancement of women in political and peace processes.
- c. Ensure increased women's representation in peace processes, peacekeeping, peace building, and in reconstruction and reconciliation mechanisms, to at least 30%, including meaningful participation in the ongoing AU Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR, as well as the East African Community led Inter-Burundian Dialogue.
- d. Strengthen women's groups networks at country level to advance their economic empowerment and political participation in the Great Lakes region through socio-economic policy initiatives and interventions.
- e. Consider conducting solidarity missions to other signatory countries to share experiences and lessons learning, and to promote capacity building and cross-border confidence building initiatives.
- f. Promote an increased involvement of prominent African women (through the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform and AU FemWise- Africa) in support of ongoing peace efforts and political processes in the Great Lakes region (particularly in Burundi, CAR, DRC, and South Sudan).
- g. Support capacity building of grassroots women and youth to improve their socio-economic conditions and enable them to better realize their role as transformers of communities and society, including through the creation of a Women's Trust Fund of the Great Lakes Countries.
- h. Endorse the participation of senior women's representatives of the Advisory Board to the ROM, to report on WPS issues in the Great Lakes region.

- i. ROM and ICGLR Chairs to co-champion WPS issues and convene a Gender Ministers meeting no later than early 2019 to assess progress in the implementation of the Gender Regional Action Plan and women's political participation in the Great Lakes region

- j. Call on the international community to increase coordination among donors and encourage international partners to work in close collaboration with the O/SESG-GL and Regional/Sub-Regional Organisations to achieve common goals for sustaining the WPS agenda in the region.