

**Briefing by Ambassador Mulamula on the Outcome of Solidarity Missions to Burundi (9-12 August 2018) and Central Africa Republic (13-15 August 2018)
Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and
Cooperation Framework**

Nairobi, 13 February 2019

1. It is recalled that 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 at its last meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in February 2018 committed to undertake joint solidarity missions to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.
2. These solidarity missions jointly organized by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General of the Great Lakes Region (O/SESG-GL), the AU, ICGLR and UN-WOMEN were undertaken, among others, in Burundi from 9-12 August and the Central African Republic (CAR) 13-15 August 2018.
3. This report is presented on behalf of H. H.E. Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe Wandira, former Vice President of Uganda and Co-Chair of FEMWISE and Member of the AU Panel of the Wise who led the delegation to Burundi and Central African Republic. She was accompanied and supported by Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, former Executive Secretary of ICGLR and Member of FEMWISE; *Dr. Attiat* Mustafa Abdelhalim Ahmed, Chair of the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum; and Ambassador Eliane Mokodopo of the ICGLR Executive Secretariat Gender, Women and Children Programme Director; UNWOMEN and the O/SESG-L.
4. The objectives of the missions were to express solidarity with women in these countries of the Great Lakes region and strengthen women's coalitions and support their meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions. It was also to raise awareness among political leaders of the need for women's participation in democratic processes and socio-economic development, as well as 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.

Following is the outcome summary report of the Solidarity Mission:

5. In **Burundi** the mission took place at the time that the country was gearing toward the next elections in 2020 and the unexpected announcement by the President of the Republic, H.E Pierre Nkurunziza that he would step down when his current term ends in

2020 despite the results of the national referendum that extended presidential term from five to seven years.

6. The delegation held consultations 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 objective was to raise awareness and galvanize the necessary political will on the need for meaningful women's participation in political processes and socio-economic development.
7. The mission also held working sessions with representatives of women groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), the media, as well as representatives of youth and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities; and the diplomatic community.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The Mission appreciated the recognition by the stakeholders that it was the first time in Burundi to have received the Women Solidarity Mission with the view to strengthen their coalitions and support their meaningful participation in all aspects of peacebuilding, reconstruction and upcoming elections.
12. Lastly, the Mission expresses sincere appreciation to the OSESG-L, UN Women and UN Country Team in Burundi for facilitating the mission and the cooperation received from the Burundi authorities.
13. In **Central Africa Republic, Bangui** the Mission 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 mission also met and highly appreciated the generous hospitality extended by the former transitional President who is also the Co-Chair of FEMWISE and Member of the Advisory Board, H.E. Catherine Samba Panza. It had the opportunity to hold discussions with 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.

14. The Mission noted with great concern the dire situation of women, with high levels of poverty, exceedingly high maternal and child mortality, illiteracy rate, lowest development indicators, limited access to basic services and insecurity. 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.
15. 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, with only 12 women representatives in Parliament out of 140 Members. The Mission was encouraged by the composition of the Constitutional Court that has 55/50 gender parity and was committed to the promotion of women. However, the Mission was informed that the gender parity law still awaited the Presidential Decree to be operationalised and that the Ministry for the Promotion of Gender, Family and Child Protection was directed to prepare the draft.
16. The Mission, in addition noted with great concern the absence of women's representation in the ongoing African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. 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 as agreed is urgently required. The President of the Republic acknowledged that CAR has strong women but weak institutions and requires massive assistance of the international community for capacity building and economic empowerment in addition to the support for peacekeeping and ongoing peace processes.
17. 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, human security 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.

18. Lastly, the Mission commended the able team of the O/SESG-L that supported and facilitated the Mission's visit for their efforts and MINUSCA and UN Country Team in Bangui for the ground support provided to the delegation.