

CONCEPT NOTE

ADVOCACY WITH THE GREAT LAKES REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARIAN FORUM/ GENDER COMMISSIONS

20 DECEMBER 2021, ARUSHA TANZANIA

BACKGROUND

1. Since the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework in 2013, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes region (OESG-GL) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), have been undertaking advocacy and solidarity initiatives to promote peace and stability, with a focus on the rights of vulnerable communities. These efforts have recently been amplified by the adoption of the United Nations (UN) Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (S/2020/1168) on 22 October 2020. The UN Strategy places a strong emphasis on gender equality and is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives, and influencing the empowerment of women in the region. Equally, countries in the region, have subscribed to a number of international instruments and regional decisions, including the Kampala Declaration to fight gender-based violence.
2. The Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance and the UN Strategy in the region have made women's participation in political, economic and peace processes, the eradication of violence against women, their access to justice, main priority areas of intervention. The Advisory Board held political and technical consultations with regional CSOs and underscored the need for effective participation of women in the design of gender responsive policies and post COVID-19 recovery measures. Additionally, the Advisory Board is committed to building a strong partnership with the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR, with a view to ensuring that legislators put the issues of women's rights at the heart of their mandate.
3. Despite the existence of legal instruments promoting and protecting women's rights, their effective implementation remains limited and there are significant gaps and challenges relating to the effective inclusion of women in political and peacebuilding processes. Sexual and gender-based violence continues unabated. Parliament, being one of the most important institutions charged with law making, representational, financial oversight and policy, has the responsibility to ensure that commitments made by regional Member States, through their signing of various agreements and conventions, are translated into legislation and implemented with concrete actions.
4. Against this backdrop, the ICGLR Vice Chair of the Regional Women Forum and the Ombudsperson of Kenya, Hon. Florence Kajuju, facilitated a consultative meeting with the Chair of the regional Parliamentary Forum (Senate Speaker of Kenya) on 11 November 2021 to discuss the best strategy to secure the engagement and active participation of all Parliaments in the region in the fight against gender-based violence. One of the outcomes of the meeting included commitment by the regional Parliamentary Chair to facilitate and participate in an advocacy meeting between women in the region and the parliamentarians. The advocacy engagement will include representatives of regional

ombudspersons, as recommended in the Advanced AU-FemWise Training held in September 2021 in Kigali, Rwanda.

5. In this regard, regional parliamentarians are meeting in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania for a retreat through to 18 December, and the Chair of the Parliamentary Forum has expressed his readiness to extend the retreat for a group of parliamentarians to facilitate an engagement between them and women representatives in Arusha on 20 December 2021. The advocacy mission will afford the parliamentarians the opportunity to have an interactive dialogue with regional women representatives, survivors of SGBV to discuss the situation of GBV in the Great Lakes region and measures aimed at reinforcing laws and policies towards the eradication of violence against women and girls.

OBJECTIVES

- To advocate for supportive initiatives to sustain gains made in peace and security in the region and ensure women's participation in political decision making.
- To engage parliamentarians in:
 - Developing gender responsive laws and policies towards the eradication of gender-based violence and violence against women, as a way of ensuring women's participation in political processes.
 - Establish systems and mechanisms that allow women to fully participate in all phases of design, adoption, implementation and evaluation of such laws and other relevant legislative processes, including those pertaining to post-COVID-19 recovery plans.
 - Facilitating the access of women's associations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to regional and international human rights mechanisms.
 - Promoting the implementation of the Kampala Declaration, the Nairobi Declaration and advocate for the existence of a Gender Desk at Police Stations in the Great Lakes region.
 - Implementing special measures for the protection of women, girls and children in the mining sector and establish a Regional Recovery Centre for victims of SGBV related to conflicts.

OUTCOMES

- The reinforcement of several initiatives, including proposed bills for women's protection and gender mainstreaming in national budgets.
- Commitment of Parliamentarians to serve as Champions for WPS in the region.
- Proposals of initiatives for the holistic recovery of SGBV victims and Survivors

PARTICIPANTS

Senior representatives of the Advisory Board, UN Women Regional Office, Regional Women Forum, survivors of gender-based violence, women civil society representatives (FFC, COCAFEM), Kampala Training Centre, Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, Panzi Foundation, representatives of AOMA and OSESG

DATES

19-21 December, with the engagement taking place on 20 December 2021.

LOCATION

Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania)