

REMARKS BY H.E MME BINETA DIOP

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ADVANCING ACTIONS AND PROMOTING POSITIVE MASCULINITY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

I would like to start by expressing my thanks to the Government and people of the Republic of Senegal for hosting us today. We have enjoyed the warm hospitality that Senegal is famous for as we discuss this important topic that is dear to the His Excellency, President Macky Sall. I would also like to thank our collaborators present particularly our friends in the UN system that have supported us and internal collaborators including the Directorate of Women Gender Youth at the AUC for the continued support.

Violence Against Women and Girls is a global pandemic that affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. It is human rights violation and violence against humankind. The World Bank estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence, 7% of women globally have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner. 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner globally. In Africa, one in every three girls is married before reaching the age of 18. There are at least 200 million women and girls who have undergone female genital mutilation, which is still performed in around 30 countries.

Not only is this a problem, it is also important to highlight that there are women are not safe anywhere. Violence against women happens anywhere, there is no safe place for women. Women are targeted at home as well as in their workplace, in schools and universities, on the street, in displacement and migration, and increasingly online through cyber violence and hate speech. Violence against women and girls in all its forms is the manifestation and failure of men to recognize the inherent equality and dignity of women and this is focused on fundamental human rights and can take many forms. This is an issue that harms the individual but also has far reaching consequences for the society and tied to broader issues of power and control in our societies.

The issue of inequality in our societies have made women vulnerable to violence. Family laws which govern inheritances, till this day discriminate against women. With institutions failing to believe victims of violence give room for impunity to thrive.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many countries have put laws and policies in place to end violence against women in different countries but issues of accountability and enforcing these laws limit women and girls' access to safety and justice and not much is done to prevent violence when it occurs as it often goes unpunished. But ending violence against women and girls requires a firm commitment not only at institutional level. It requires a broad involvement of international organisations, NGOs, civil society organizations and most of all of men.

For too long, one of the problems in tackling violence against women has been that men have been ignored as part of the solutions for too long, but we have taken the right step in the right direction. Working with men and boys to challenge toxic masculinity and gender inequality has a positive impact on women and girls. The involvement of men and boys in ending violence against women and girls through transformative programs. It is important that individuals, government, and civil society need to build a more gender equitable society with healthier gender roles for women and men.

To be effective, strategies must not only empower women, but also should engage men and bring about significant changes in men's attitudes and practices which are often discouraged by negative notions of masculinity. It is common among many communities for women and children to be subjected to gender-based violence and other forms of violence which include, harassment and harmful traditional practices.

Our top priority should remain to eliminate violence against women and girls consciously and for good. I am glad that President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has taken

the bull by the horn in galvanizing international mobilisation to defend the rights of every woman and every girl to live free and safe with commitment of men. We do it for our future and for our present because women are the pillar of just, open, developed, and democratic societies, and nothing should deprive them of the freedom to play their role freely and safely.

I would like to share a few recommendations for our reflection.

- First, it is imperative that work is done in transforming the structures and cultures that allow violence against women to happen in the first place. We need to address gender imbalances in our countries and institutions.
- We should stop harmful ideas that promote Toxic Masculinity
- On an institutional level, adequate and sustainable support should be channelled to Women's Organizations and services globally and, in our communities,
- Most importantly, we need to have a peer accountability and tracking mechanism. We need to hold each other accountable calling it out when you see it, and making sure other people know and understand why catcalling, inappropriate sexual comments, unwanted sexual attention, sexist and demeaning jokes, and more, are not okay

In conclusion, we can change harmful beliefs at the core of the problems as what was learned can be unlearned. It's imperative that we all join hands together and end violence against women and girls.

I thank you.