

REMARKS BY H.E MME BINETA DIOP

**SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION
ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES

13-14 DECEMBER 2023

Thank you, our moderator, Dr. Kezie Nwoha Helen, Executive Director, Women's International Peace Centre for the floor.

- **Your excellency Sahle-Work Zewde**, President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia
- **Your excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat** Chairperson for the African Union Commission
- **Your excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**, Former President of Liberia and Patron of AWLN.
- **Your excellency Catherine Samba-Panza**, Former President of Central African Republic
- **Your excellency Dr. Joyce Hilda Banda**, Former president of the Republic of Malawi and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders
- **Mrs. Awa Ndiaye Seck**, Special Representative of UN Women to the AU and UNECA

Delegates from the Member States

Members of the Diplomatic core

Representatives from the civil society

Good morning!

I am pleased to welcome you to the fourth Africa Forum on Women Peace and Security that we have convened under the leadership of H.E Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the champion of the Annual forum on WPS. Thank you, madam president, for your time.

I also want to recognize HE Moussa Fakhi Mahamat the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, a true champion of gender equality and women's leadership in Africa and beyond. Thank you, excellency, for your leadership, commitment and support to the agenda of the WPS in Africa, demonstrated by your presence here today.

Distinguished participants, I welcome you and thank you for finding time to travel out of your busy schedule to participate in this Africa forum on WPS which is the fourth since we launched the first forum in 2020, in which we agreed to institutionalize the forum by making it an annual event to serve as a platform where we gather to review the role and leadership of women in peace and security processes, and most importantly federate our efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa. The forum takes place alongside the African women leader's network consultation.

Excellencies, Ladies, and gentlemen,

In this Fourth Africa forum we aim to deepen our discussion on what we need to do differently to enhance the participation and leadership of women in peace and security processes. Because despite having marked 23 years of the unscr1325 and 20 years of Maputo protocol, the foundational demands for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking; protection from all forms of violence and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in conflict prevention measures are yet to be met.

This is also demonstrated in the third report of the African Union Commission Chairperson on the status of women peace and security agenda in Africa which we are going to launch during the forum. The report shows some progress, on the policy commitments especially on adoption of national action plans for the implementation of WPS, but also some gaps.

- For instance, the current peace and security challenges facing our continent; the rise in military coups; insurgency, terrorism and political crises demonstrate the inefficiency of our conflict prevention measures, which I firmly believe is a result of among others, the exclusion of women and gender perspectives in conflict prevention strategies.
- And on the **participation** front, Statistics show that women are still grossly underrepresented in peace process. In the Central African Republic national dialogue of 2022, only 17 per cent of the 450 participants present were women. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace consultations in Nairobi of April 2022, women were glaring absent. Likewise, in the 2022 Chad peace talks in Doha only one woman was present among the over 50 participants present. In the current Sudan political process, women are glaring absent irrespective of their active role to mobilise for peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is because of this, that we have chosen to focus on women's participation and leadership in peace processes in Africa.

Indeed, research has demonstrated that women's leadership in peacebuilding increases the sustainability of peace efforts.

Women play an immeasurable role in preventing or de-escalating conflict, brokering local ceasefires, promoting cultures of peace and coexistence, and preventing recruitment of children as combatants. Yet the numbers show us that investment in women and girls—and willingness to ensure their involvement in peacebuilding efforts—is desperately low.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to report that, following the outcomes of our last forum in December 2023, we have implemented some of the recommendations made including the need to conduct a field peace advocacy mission in DRC, which we organized in August 2023, where we met key actors and women peace builders. We have put plans to follow up the field mission recommendations including to hold a regional forum with the women of the great lake's region early in 2024 and to meet with core political leaders and actors in the DRC neighboring countries. This should give us confidence that we are committed to carry forward the outcomes of the forum.

As I come towards remarks, I wish to make a plea to our leaders on the following:

That measures are put in place to ensure successful elections in DRC, where women are included and protected from any form of electoral related violence

That women of Sudan, who are disproportionately affected by the crises and who are championing for peace be accorded a seat in the ongoing efforts of finding a lasting peace in Sudan

And that the sanctions in Niger, which have contributed to the worsening of the situation of women be lifted.

And finally, I want to thank the many partners who have consistently believed in our vision and provided technical and financial support in the running of the office and the forum. I wish to recognize, the governments of Denmark, German, Norway, Ireland, Canada, Luxembourg together with our UN agencies including the UN Women, UNDP, UNOAU and UNITAR. As the office upscales its efforts I call upon your continued support.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to request we federate our actions to deliver transformation in the lives of women as per our aspirations in the various instruments (Maputo protocol, UNSCR,1325 and agenda 2063 among others). The discussions we will have for the next two days seek to look at how we progress women's participation in peace process including how to design women led tables.

With these remarks, I wish to welcome you all to the forum and I look forward to fruitful discussions.

I thank you for your kind attention.