THE NAIROBI CALL TO ACTION ON EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN AFRICA

Preamble

We, Government Ministers of Africa, high-level government officials from Africa, the African Union (AU), representatives of the United Nations organizations, Civil Society Organizations; Forum for African Women educationalist (FAWE), the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), International and Regional Organizations and the Academia that gathered for the Conference on Education of girls and women in conflict and post conflict situations in Africa held on 22nd May 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Express our gratitude to the G7 and in particular, Prime Minister Trudeau for making available resources that target interventions for education of women and girls in conflict and post conflict reconstruction situations, further express our gratitude to President Kenyatta for championing and providing the platform to evolve a Common African Position and for his availability to carry and champion the African voice at the Women Deliver Conference in Vancouver

Welcome The African Union Heads of States decision to earmark 2019 as the year to focus on the plight of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa under the theme *"Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa: Towards Durable Solution to Forced Displacement"*.

Inspired by the AU Agenda 2063 Aspiration six (6) that targets to have all forms of Gender-Based Violence(GBV) against women and girls be reduced by a third by 2023 and the ultimate creation of a new African citizen who is sufficiently empowered as an effective agent of change; SDG 4 emphasis on equitable quality education and life long opportunities for those in vulnerable situations

Conscious that gender inequality is still pervasive in many parts of the African continent and heightened in many of the continent's conflict and post-conflict contexts,

Concerned that Africa is home to 34% (24.2 million) global population of people of concern including 14.5 million IDPs, 6.3 million refugees, 1.7 million returnees and 712,000 stateless persons (UNHCR 2018, Persons of Concern report). That refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers (UNHCR 2016); girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school if they live in a conflict-affected country, and 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than those living elsewhere (UNESCO, 2015)

Note with concern that multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities combine in complex ways to deny millions of girls and women their right to education, confining them to a vicious cycle of gross forms of gender-based violence, poverty and lifelong deprivation,

Disturbed that some of the girls and women in conflict and post-conflict contexts remain invisible to humanitarian or policy interventions – because they live in families that have been displaced by conflict; have been forcefully abducted and compelled to live with combatants as 'wives' or sex slaves and at point of rescue have been conditioned to an abusive state of mind; or are living with disabilities and do not receive adequate support to access quality education

Recognize that African States have made various explicit national, regional and international commitments that oblige them to ensure children in their territories enjoy the entitlement and right to education that is **available**, **accessible**, **acceptable** and **adaptable** to their unique needs and specific contexts. For many learners, and more particularly for girls in Africa's conflict and post conflict situations, this remains a dream, and a very distant one,

Achieving this process would require taking stock of progress made in educational context of girls and women living in countries that have experienced conflict. Using this trajectory, it is possible that CSOs and education stakeholders can collaborate with Governments in ensuring transformative education for girls and women is achieved regardless of the conflict situation,

Therefore the following issues affecting girls and women education in conflict and post-conflict situations emerged during the discussions:

I.   **Educational outcomes for girls are worst in conflict situations**: It is estimated that girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict affected countries (UNESCO Report-2016). Adolescent girls are nearly 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school. In countries affected by conflict, girls constitute 55 percent of primary age children who are not in school. They also form the majority of lower secondary age children out of school in conflict zones (UNESCO Report-2011).

II. **Conflict situations heighten vulnerabilities for girls**: Indicators such as the number of girls and women killed, maimed, raped or abducted have now become the gold standard of describing conflict sitations in Africa. This normalization of violence on women and girls in Africa is unacceptable. In certain conflicts, girls and women may be targeted by combatants who abduct them as sex slaves or for war propaganda reasons. In active conflict zones, the routes between home and the school can be highly risky for girls to venture into. In refugee or transit camps, girls are often susceptible to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. Even in post conflict situations, the culture of violence fostered during conflict may well continue into the post-conflict phase, and girls can be particularly vulnerable. These multiple threats can affect girls simultaneously, in the process creating complex barriers to safe and quality education for girls.

III. **Targeted attacks on schools**: At times, combatants may use school grounds as their bases, deliberately targeting the destruction of school infrastructure and/or targeting teachers and children. Such insecurity in and around schools, often leads to teachers and children abondoning the schools, loss of morale, poor retention in schools within such localities, the greatest effect being deterioration of the quality of learning.

IV. **Children with Disabilities, particularly girls, face the greatest barriers to education in conflict or post-conflict situations**: Conflict situations heighten the risks of disability for children through failures of health systems to provide adequate disability preventive care, or from war-induced injuries leading to disabilities for children. During acute cases of conflict children with disabilities are often abandoned as families flee from hostilities. Access to school for children with disabilities is often constrained by a lack of understanding of the children's needs, by teachers' lack of disability awareness training and skills and by the unconducive learning environments, classrooms and learning resources which are often ill-suited for children with disabilities.

V. **Girls and women in transit or in refugee camps may never go through their education.**
During conflict, some children are not intergrated into national education intergration program, because of the perceived statelessness. There is no clear policy framework on reintergration of learners on transit and in refugee camp into the host country education system.

VI. **There is a dearth of data on the magnitude of constraints to girls' education in conflict and post-conflict contexts in Africa.** Rigorous and systematic research, monitoring and evaluation data on interventions seeking to enhance access to quality education for children, particularly girls, is rare in sub-saharan Africa, thus leading to negative impact on the quality of intervention.

COMMIT ourselves to taking appropriate actions, and urge all other Governments and stakeholders to expedite action on the following recommendations:

1. Encourage more African women researchers to lead studies and evaluations of responses to education in conflict and post-conflict situations, in order to give such undertakings, the gender perspective and the nuance required to capture the reality of girls and women in conflict and post-conflict situation in Africa.

2. Conduct rigorous advocacy in mainstreaming gender analysis and equality of education throughout the conflict response cycle and post-conflict situation in Africa.

Conference
Education of girls and women in conflict and post conflict situations in Africa

Conférence
L'éducation des filles et des femmes dans les situations de conflit et de post-conflit en Afrique

22nd May 2019, Windsor Golf Hotel & Country Club
Nairobi, Kenya

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3. Equip teachers in conflict and post-conflict situations, with appropriate skills and aptitude for offering psychosocial support and to be able to build urgency and life skills among learners. More emphasis on recruiting female teachers who will offer great motivation to girls and young women, and also act as as role models.

4. Support the recruitment and deployment of women mediators in conflict and post-conflict situations, to reinforce the gender approach in peace settlement processes.

5. Adopt a community-based approach to eradicate the ingrained culture of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in conflict and post-conflict contexts not only as an important societal step in keeping girls and young women safe, but also as a way of changing the culture and values within society and further nurture quality education.

6. Develop uniquely tailored educational interventions that address the needs of children with disabilities and especially those in conflict regions. These interventions must cover the whole spectrum of children with disability: from early childhood development and care, to tertiary levels of learning with great attention to acute phases of violent conflict and period of relocation.

7. Call on international support and a Pan-African commitment to fully implement the African Union Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) and the Gender Equality Strategy (GES) in a bid to ensure that all learners and especially those historically secluded are assisted to acquire quality education; and to ensure gender mainstreaming in Africa's education systems.

8. Develop and implement re-entry policies for teenage mothers and pregnant girls in conflict and post-conflict situations to continue with their education.

9. Provide safe zones and equip the relevant actors to provide holistic interventios to girls in conflict and post conflict situations such as parenting skills to young mothers who are survivors of conflict.

10. Establish and strengthen Technical, Vocational and Education Training (TVET) institutions including reviewing re-entry criteria as a mechanism to empower out-of-school girls and women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

11. Establish and maintain safe zones for school going children and equip the relevant actors to provide holistic interventions to girls in conflict and post-conflict situations such as parenting skills to young mothers who are survivors of conflict.

This outcome document developed from the Nairobi Conference will be presented by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta at the Women Deliver conference in Vancouver, Canada as the African position on education for girls and women in conflict situations. Further, it is anticipated that the document will be presented at the next African Union Ordinary Session in January 2020 for endorsement and will inform the framework that the Office of Special envoy of chairperson for African Union Commission of Women Peace & Security will adopt towards advocacy on education for girls and women, and will also be adopted by GIMAC as a working document.