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**Assemblée Nationale
Djibouti**

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS
OF THE AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

(Adopted)

On the margins of the 42nd Conference of the African Parliamentary Union, the Committee of Women Parliamentarians met on 27 November 2019 in Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti, chaired by Right Honourable Mabel Memory Chinomona, President of the Senate of Zimbabwe, Chairperson of the Committee.

She was assisted by Honourable Saadia Nouara Djaafar, Rapporteur, and Mr. Idi Gado Boubacar, Secretary-General of APU.

Members of the following parliaments took part in meeting: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

At the opening of the meeting, the Committee first adopted the agenda, as follows:

1. Welcome address by the Chairperson of the Committee of Women Parliamentarians
2. Theme on: “The role of parliaments in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Africa”
3. Adoption of the draft resolution
4. Other business

In her opening address, the Chairperson of the Committee of Women Parliamentarians of APU, on behalf of the Committee and on her own behalf, thanked the Djiboutian authorities and people, as well as the Djiboutian women parliamentarians, for all the attention and hospitality shown to the participants.

Tackling the theme of the meeting, “Role of parliaments in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Africa”, she presented the African context, where deaths often occur from pregnancy-related complications. These unnecessary losses of life, she said, amounted to the denial of the right to life of women and children.

She expressed the hope that the health of mothers and children would be placed at the heart of national development policies. More than ever, we must work together tirelessly to improve the health of women and children now, and beyond 2030, she said.

However, many regions currently face serious health risks, including high maternal and neonatal mortality rates, the spread of infectious and noncommunicable diseases and poor reproductive health.

Significant progress has been made in increasing life expectancy and reducing some major causes of infant and maternal mortality. However, achieving the target of less than 70 maternal deaths per 1000 live births by 2030 would require improved health care; while reducing premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases by one third would require more efficient technologies.

Additional efforts are needed to completely eliminate a wide range of diseases and solve many persistent and emerging health problems. By focusing on more effective financing of health systems, improved sanitation and hygiene, better access to health professionals and improved advisory services on how to reduce environmental pollution, significant progress can be made to save lives, she continued.

Lastly, she wished the Committee success in its work and declared the meeting of the Committee of Women Parliamentarians of APU open.

Upon resumption of the meeting, Honourable Nouria Waberi Ouffaneh, Member of the National Assembly of Djibouti, took the floor to welcome all participants to the meeting of the APU Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

The Committee then considered the items on the agenda:

“The role of parliaments in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Africa”.

As the topic was being discussed, Right Honourable Alassane Bala Sakandé, Speaker of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso, Chairman of the Executive Committee of APU dropped in at the meeting. He congratulated the women parliamentarians of APU, and, asked the men to stand up and give the women a standing ovation.

He said that he really wanted to meet with the women to show the respect due them and called for all decision-making bodies to include women, so as to give everyone an opportunity to achieve equity.

He reassured them that he would always fight for the cause of women. He therefore wanted to give his support and congratulate them on a job well done.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, expressed her satisfaction with that sign of respect. With regard to the theme on the agenda, she encouraged women to unite to care for themselves and their children, so as to save the lives of mothers and newborns.

Upon resumption of the session, following the departure of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, the discussions continued. And after an intense and fruitful debate, the Committee of Women Parliamentarians wrote a draft resolution as follows:

Draft resolution

The Committee of African Women Parliamentarians of the African Parliamentary Union, meeting on 27 November 2019 in Djibouti,

- (a) *Aware* of the poor performance of health systems in some African countries and the low quality of care for mothers and newborns in most health facilities,
- (b) *Recognizing* the place and role of parliaments in the fight against maternal and neonatal mortality,
- (c) *Considering* the reduction of the maternal and neonatal mortality rate as a key factor for the survival and development of all children through adolescence, particularly in Africa,
- (d) *Recalling* the relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 3), which, in 2018, provided for a reduction in maternal and infant mortality by 2030,
- (e) *Noting* that the risk of death is also higher in rural areas and in the poorest households,
- (f) *Considering* that while the under-five mortality rate has declined overall, the proportion of deaths in Africa is increasing,
- (g) *Noting* that the education of mothers remains a powerful determinant of inequality: children of educated mothers are more likely to survive than those of uneducated mothers,
- (h) *Considering* that HIV is the leading cause of death among women of childbearing age,
- (i) *Considering* that in times of conflict, insecurity and the vulnerability of women and children lead to many deaths,

Proposes the following recommendations to the 42nd Conference:

1. Strengthen security in countries in conflict in order to protect especially women and children;
2. Take into account some WHO recommendations: care throughout labour and delivery; care during the first phase of labour; the second and third phases; and immediate care of the newborn and the mother after delivery;
3. Improve skilled health care to reduce premature deaths by one third by 2030 and achieve SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all people at all ages;

4. Ensure more effective financing of health systems for improved sanitation and hygiene, better access to health professionals and improved advice on how to reduce environmental pollution; thereby making progress can be made to save lives;
5. Promote health services by providing scholarships for training health personnel and supporting institutions such as WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women to improve maternal and newborn health;
6. Pass laws to update and enhance reproductive health legislation in order to punish traditional practices harmful to maternal and child health;
7. Raise awareness by African parliaments, among their governments, about increasing funding for community health, infrastructure construction and equipment, training of public health staff and supplying anti-malaria drugs during antenatal consultations and distributing impregnated bed nets;
8. Ensure free access by women to family planning services;
9. Ensure that delivery takes place in the presence of skilled personnel and provide access to emergency obstetric care to save lives;
10. Women parliamentarians to organize awareness sessions, women's associations, women's business associations in high schools, middle schools for girls and couples as well as in rural areas;
11. Establish family planning counselling centres;
12. Facilitate the implementation of a programme to reduce women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, noncommunicable diseases and hepatitis;
13. Mobilize resources to support non-formal education and adult literacy among women in rural areas to improve their health-seeking behaviour;
14. Mobilize resources for the acquisition of antiretroviral drugs at affordable cost for HIV-positive mothers and children;
15. Seek funding sources to open breastmilk banks;
16. Establish of free and accessible immunization services for all infants;
17. Adopt laws for the care and protection of AIDS patients.

Other business

In other business, the Chairperson of the Committee first gave the floor to the Secretary-General of APU for a presentation.

Her presentation focused on the preparation of a regional study on “Gender bias, harassment and violence against women in African parliaments”. This study will be conducted at the level of the Africa region as part of the cooperation between IPU and APU.

The Chairperson then presented the activity programme proposed at the 41st Conference of APU Conference held in Abuja, in November 2018:

- Implementation of joint activities with UNWomen and IPU on issues such as early child marriages, unemployment, immigration, quota for women's participation;
- Creation of a Facebook page or other platform to enable APU women parliamentarians to maintain contact and exchange views on issues of common concern;
- Implementation of the recommendation on early marriage: organization in each country, of a parliamentary awareness tour on the issue.

For the implementation of the said programme, the Chairperson stressed the need for a budget line allocated to the Women's Committee to carry out their activities; permanent assistance to the APU Secretariat.

She also asked the women to fill out the forms prepared by the APU Secretariat for the creation of a platform that will enable them to communicate.

With regard to partnerships, she reported on the participation of the Secretary-General of APU in the Forum of Women Parliamentarians at the 141st IPU General Assembly held in Belgrade, where she made a presentation on harassment of women.

Lastly, the Chairperson of the Women's Committee proposed that caucuses of women parliamentarians should be created at the national, subregional and continental levels, regardless of their membership in any political party. This is to unite their efforts for better results. To this end, she pointed to the experience of SADC, which has already created its caucus at the subregional level and will soon do so at the continental level.

This proposal was adopted by the Committee of Women Parliamentarians of APU.

At the end of the meeting of the Committee of African Women Parliamentarians, the Chairperson welcomed the active contribution of the participants through fruitful and enriching exchanges on the theme and other items on the agenda.

She also congratulated the APU Secretariat on all the technical support provided to the Committee, which contributed to the smooth running of the meeting.

Done in Djibouti, 27 November 2019