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APU

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REPORT OF THE APU COMMITTEE OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

On the occasion of the 41st Conference of the African Parliamentary Union, the committee of women parliamentarians met on the 7th of November 2018, in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria, under the chairmanship of honourable Anna POUBAYE GOMIS, deputy of the National Assembly of Senegal, chairperson of the Committee of women parliamentarians of the APU.

She was assisted by honourable Louba ELKOHLI, deputy of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, rapporteur of the Committee and Mr. NZI Koffi, Secretary General of the APU.

The female members of the following parliaments participated in the deliberations: Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Honourable BUMA GOOD HEAD, deputy of Nigeria, first of all took the floor to welcome all the participants to the meeting of women parliamentarians of the APU.

In her opening speech, the chairperson of the Committee of women parliamentarians of the APU, on behalf of the Committee and in her personal capacity, thanked the leaders and people of Nigeria as well as women parliamentarians of Nigeria for the marks of attention and sympathy shown to the participants of the Committee's deliberations.

Speaking on the theme of the agenda, namely: **“The promotion of girl child education as an efficient way of fighting against early marriages in Africa”**, she presented the African context marked by early marriages, the consequences of which can be devastating for young girls.

In essence, she said that a girl who gets married early is at greater risk of dropping out school and having a shorter period of education than her mates who get married later. And early marriages in Africa could slow efforts at fighting poverty if girls are deprived of the possibility to acquire education and earn a living.

She reminded the Committee that African Parliamentarians, as elected representatives of the people, have the duty and power to ensure that laws and other measures are put in place and applied to fight this cause. She expressed the wish that everything will be put in place to adopt texts with a view to acting comprehensively.

In conclusion, she wished complete success to the deliberations of the Committee and declared open the meeting of the Committee of women parliamentarians of the APU.

After several exchanges of view on the 1st point of the agenda, namely “activities report for 2017”, the latter was removed. The assembly however expressed the wish that a report should be produced in order to explain the reasons for the non execution of the activities programme for 2017.

Taking the floor, the Secretary General of the APU suggested to the Committee to proceed with the election of the new Bureau while taking into account the principle of rotation. This will enable the Committee to make a fresh start on a new footing and to reassess itself.

The Committee then proceeded to adopt the agenda of the meeting, amended as follows:

1. Programme of activities for 2019;
2. Promotion of the education of the girl child as an efficient way of fighting against early marriages in Africa;
3. Election of the Bureau;
4. Any other business (AOB).

The deliberations were suspended to enable members of the Committee of African women parliamentarians of the APU to pay a curtsey call on Her Excellence Mrs. AISHA MUHAMMADU BUHARI, First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, represented by Her Excellence, Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo, wife of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. She was surrounded by women parliamentarians of Nigeria and some members of her cabinet.

After the customary introductions, honourable Mabel Memory CHINOMONA, President of the Senate of Zimbabwe, on behalf of the Committee of women parliamentarians and in her personal capacity, expressed appreciation for the audience granted the group by the First Lady, represented by the wife of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and then expressed gratitude to her.

In her welcome address, Mrs. DOLAPO OSINBAJO expressed her happiness to receive African Women Parliamentarians of the APU, on behalf of the First Lady, Mrs. AISHA MUHAMMADU BUHARI. You are the women, the mothers, she continued, who are committed to advancing all the issues affecting the girls and women of the continent. The theme of the agenda is proof of this, namely: “The promotion of girl child education as an efficient way fighting against early marriages in Africa”. This theme is important and contributes to current efforts aimed at changing things and stopping the menace that early marriage constitutes. Having said this, all efforts aimed correcting this bad tendency is welcome, she pointed out.

Mrs. Osinbanjo exalted the representatives of the people not to give up the fight, by denouncing early marriages and defending the oppressed.

I appeal to you to redouble your efforts, by particularly focusing on public sensitization programmes on the scourge of early marriage without forgetting religious and traditional institutions. To succeed, break all the barriers depriving girls of access to a good education and promising future, she stressed.

In conclusion, she wished fruitful deliberation to African women parliamentarians of the APU.

On resumption of the deliberations, the Committee proceeded to consider the points on the amended agenda.

1- Activities report for 2019

The non-executed activities programme of 2017 was rolled over, given the importance of the activities in it.

- Execution of joint activities with UN WOMEN and IPU on issues such as early marriage of girls, unemployment, and quota of the participation of women;
- creation of facebook page or other platform to enable women parliamentarians of the APU maintain contact and exchange views on common issues of concern.
- Implementation of the recommendation on early marriage: organization in each country of a parliamentary of sensitization on the issue.

2- the promotion of girl child education as an efficient way of fighting against early marriages in Africa

At the end of an intense debate on this theme, the committee of women parliamentarians of the APU drew up the following draft proposal and requested the integration of this resolution in the activities programme for the year 2018.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

“The promotion of girl child education as an efficient way of fighting against early marriages in Africa”

Explanatory statement

According to the World Bank, education remains the best means that can be used to fight against early marriage. The report indicates that the consequences of early marriage can be devastating for young girls, who thus find themselves deprived of the possibility studying and earning a living, but are exposed to the risks of complications related to pregnancy and birth among adolescents girls.

Early marriages slow down efforts to fight against poverty, as well as the attainment of the objectives of economic growth and equity, stresses Quentin Wodon, co-author of the report.

Indeed, girls participate efficiently in the socio economic advancement of a country, and the World Bank group is determined to ensure that they can continue to pursue their education and acquire skills and knowledge. In most African countries, each year in the secondary education system contributes to the reduction of the possibility of being married before the age of 18 years by at least five percentage points. However, a girl who gets married early runs a greater risk of dropping out of school and having fewer years of education than her mates that got married later.

Women that have secondary school education are generally in better health than those that are not educated; they are better integrated into the formal labour market and earn a bigger salary. They get married later, have fewer children and are more capable of taking care of the health of the latter. Taken together, all these factors contribute to pulling households, communities and countries in question out of poverty.

In 2016, the World Bank made an undertaking to invest 2.5 billion Dollars over a period of five years in education projects that directly benefit adolescent girls. Thus, with the needs and rights girls having been sufficiently taken into consideration in the Millennium Development Goals, it is important that a central position be reserved for the rights of girls and, in particular the fight against child marriage, in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals approved in August 2015.

- a- considering the fight against early marriages
- b- considering the high rate of school dropout and the high rate (47%) of early marriages in Africa;
- c- noting that education remains the best means that can be used to fight against early marriage;
- d- noting that early marriage will cost developing countries thousands of millions of dollars between now and 2030;
- e- noting that the consequences of early marriage can be devastating for young girls, who end up deprived of the possibility of education and earning a living; but are also exposed to risks of complications related to pregnancy and child birth among adolescents girls;
- f- emphasizing that putting an end this practice is moral a requirement that is an makes common economic sense;

- g- considering that sustainably girls educating is one of the best means of putting an end to early marriages.
- h- considering that girls participate efficiently in the socio-economic advancement of a country;
- i- determined to ensure that they able to pursue their education and acquire skills and knowledge;

Recommends:

- 1- The adoption and putting in place of legislative and legal framework to maintain and protect girls that are school;
- 2- The involvement of decentralized local authorities in the running and management of schools;
- 3- The strengthening of obligatory and free education up to the age of 16 years;
- 4- The award of excellence prices to the best students and the creation of schools for husbands;
- 5- The involvement of African women parliamentarians in the promotion of girl child education as an efficient way of fighting against early marriages;
- 6- The introduction of a module on the fight against early marriages in national education programmes for an informed awareness of girls;
- 7- A strong mobilization of boys and girls, fathers, mothers and political and religious leaders so that they can revisit practices that are sources of discrimination;
- 8- Harmonization by African countries of the marriage age, between 18 and 21 years;
- 9- The promotion of family planning;
- 10- The granting of allowances to young girl-mothers who are engaged in small businesses, in order to promote revenue generating activities;
- 11- The control of customary and religious marriages by the law;
- 12- The strengthening of the law on sexual harassment of girls in secondary schools and universities;

- 13- The support or backing of African governments to associations and NGO working to promote women and young girls;
- 14- The adoption by African national parliaments of the resolutions and recommendations of the Committee of women parliamentarians of the APU;
- 15- The accompaniment of adolescents girls and women in communities in favour of their emancipation: economic empowerment, delaying their marriage, expansion of the provision of reproductive, maternal and child health;
- 16- The taking into account a number of international instruments relating to human rights, such as:
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
 - The United Nations Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1964)
 - The International Pact on Civil and Political Rights and the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);
 - The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms Discrimination against Women (1981);
 - The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981);
 - The Bamako Protocol for the Protection of Childhood (2001);
 - The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (2001);
- 17- The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Emphasis should be placed on the targets and goals that are related to the promotion of young girls;
- 18- Goal 4: Access to quality education, targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5 among others:
- 4.1 From now to 2030, ensure that all girls and boys go through, on an equal footing, a complete circle of quality, free primary and secondary education that will equip them with really useful skills;
 - 4.2 From now to 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to services of development and early childhood care and preschool education that prepares them to go through primary education;

- 4.5 From now to 2030, eliminate the inequalities between the sexes in the area of education and ensure access to **vulnerable persons**, including **handicapped persons**, indigenous persons and children in vulnerable situation, at all levels of formal and professional education.

3- Election of the Bureau

Before the election of the new Bureau, the chairperson reminded the Committee of the provisions of article 34 of Internal Regulations of the APU which stipulates in its paragraph 1 that:

“The Committee of Women Parliamentarians shall elect, from among its members, a President, a Vice President and a Rapporteur. The members of the Bureau shall be elected for two years, on the rotating basis that takes into account an equitable regional balance.”

At the end of intense debates, the new Bureau was constituted as follows:

Rt. Honourable Mabel Memory CHINOMONA, President of the Senate of Zimbabwe, 15 votes out of 20: **Chairperson**,

Honourable Nassalatou DIABY, deputy of Côte d’Ivoire, 18 votes out of 20, **Vice chairperson**,

Honourable Fatima BERAHO, deputy of Algeria, 20 votes out of 20: **Rapporteur**.

The chairperson expressed her sincere thanks to the Committee for the confidence reposed in her and in other members of the Bureau to lead the Committee.

4- Any other Business

At the end of the deliberations of the Committee of African women parliamentarians, the chairperson was delighted about the active contribution of the participants through fruitful and enriching exchanges on the theme and other points on the agenda.

Furthermore, she expressed her congratulations to the General Secretariat of the APU for the technical support placed at the disposal of the Committee. This contributed to the successful completion of the deliberations.

Done in Abuja, on 7th November 2018