



African Parliamentary Union

43rd CONFERENCE
76th Session of the Executive Committee
Djibouti, 11 – 15 October 2021



National Assembly
Djibouti

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

REPORT
(Adopted)

At the 43rd Conference of the African Parliamentary Union, the Committee of Women Parliamentarians met on 13 October 2021 in Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti. In the chair was Hon. Maybe Mbohwa, Member of the National Assembly of Zimbabwe, representing the Right Honourable Mabel Memory Chinomona, President of the Senate of Zimbabwe, Chairperson of the Committee, who was unable to attend.

She was assisted by Hon. Mokhtaria Chentouf, Senator of the Senate of Algeria, Rapporteur and Mr. Gado Boubakar Idi, Secretary-General of APU.

Members of the following parliaments took part in the proceedings: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

At the opening of the meeting, prior to adopting the draft agenda, the Committee heard a message from the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Djibouti, Chairman of the APU Executive Committee, the Right Honourable Mohamed Ali Houmed.

He welcomed the presence of African women parliamentarians, whom he described as committed women, who are the lifeblood of parliaments. Men, he said, were attentive to the actions and words of women parliamentarians, the linchpins of the continent. He expressed the hope that they would do all in their stead to ensure the survival of the Union, so that Mother Africa remains a responsible continent that relies on itself to improve the livelihoods of its people.

In conclusion, he welcomed the women to Djibouti, a land of hospitality and encounters.

The committee then moved on to adopt the draft agenda and consider the items:

1. Welcome address by the Chairperson of the Committee of Women Parliamentarians
2. The political, economic and social role of African women in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Adoption of the draft resolution
4. Election of the Bureau of the Committee (Chair, Vice-Chair, Rapporteur)
5. Any other business

In her opening address, Hon. Maybe Mbohwa, Member of Parliament for Zimbabwe, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee of Women Parliamentarians, who was unable to attend, thanked the authorities and the people of Djibouti, as well as the women parliamentarians of Djibouti, for their hospitality towards participants.

Addressing the theme, “The political, economic and social role of African women in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”, she presented the African scene, characterized by a low number of cases, compared to other regions. This was in May 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This raised hopes that African countries could avoid the worst of this pandemic. However, caution should be exercised, she continued, as the disease was not fully known. The mortality rate would depend largely on the measures taken by governments. According to WHO, the virus and its effects could be latent for several years.

While African countries have acted decisively in the face of the pandemic, and the number of cases and deaths is relatively low so far, the scale of the challenge and the underlying vulnerabilities of the continent cannot be underestimated, she said.

It was in this regard that the theme of the APU Committee of Women Parliamentarians was important.

She then acknowledged the pioneering role played by women, including doctors, nurses and assistants working on the front line in the fight against COVID-19.

Furthermore, she stressed that despite the increased gender-based violence they experienced during the lockdown, women have shown exemplary resilience and solidarity.

For all these reasons, she expressed the hope that women would be able to participate in all decision-making processes to ensure that their concerns are better taken into account, so that they can continue their efforts to mobilize their communities to carry out activities aimed at preventing and managing this pandemic.

These are some of the ideas that could guide the actions of women for a full participation of African women whose political, economic and social role in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is undeniable, she stressed.

She then expressed her gratitude to all the women parliamentarians and guests who took part in the meeting.

She also thanked the Djibouti national group for all the arrangements made for the meeting to be held in Djibouti.

In conclusion, she wished the meeting every success and declared the meeting of the APU Committee of Women Parliamentarians open.

Hon. Nouria Waberi Houfane, 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 as follows:

“The political, economic and social role of African women in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”.

After intensive and fruitful discussions, the APU Committee of Women Parliamentarians formulated a draft resolution submitted to the 43rd Conference. (see in annex)

Election of Bureau

Prior to the election of the new Bureau, the Chairperson highlighted the provisions of Rule 34 paragraph 1 of the APU Rules of Procedure, which stipulate that:

“The committee of Women Parliamentarians shall elect, from among its members, a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and a Rapporteur. The members of the Bureau shall be elected for a period of two years on a rotating basis taking into account an equitable geographical distribution”.

The new Bureau is as follows:

Hon. Veneranda Nyirahirwa, Member of the National Assembly of Rwanda, was elected Chairperson by acclamation.

Hon. Said Rasha, Member of the National Assembly of Egypt, 11 votes out of 15, was elected Vice-President.

Hon. Pitroipa/Nassouri Lamoudi Germaine, Member of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

The Chair-elect expressed her gratitude to the APU Committee of African Women Parliamentarians for the confidence placed in her and to the other members of the Bureau for working on the Committee.

Other business

On this item, the Chairperson of the Committee first gave the floor to the Secretary-General of APU give a statement on the completion of the regional study on “Gender, harassment and violence against women in African parliaments”, in partnership between IPU and APU.

The Secretary-General reported that due to the disruptions associated with COVID-19, individual interviews were conducted by telephone or other online communication platforms.

In order to make the survey as representative as possible, at least three women MPs and two women administrative staff were required to participate from each parliament.

In addition, IPU sent a message to the APU Conference with a view to sharing with the Women's Committee the results of the survey, the arrangements for its launch and the expected involvement of APU and parliaments in its dissemination and implementation of its recommendations. The Committee therefore appointed the Rapporteur to present the message to the Conference.

The Secretary-General then suggested to the Committee that the programme of activities presented at the 41st APU Conference held in November 2018 in Abuja, which could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, should be taken up again:

- Carrying out joint activities with UNWOMEN and IPU on issues such as early marriage of girls, unemployment, immigration, quota for women's participation.
- Creation of a face book 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: organizing a parliamentary awareness-raising tour in each country.

At the end of the session of the APU Committee of Women Parliamentarians, the Chairperson expressed her satisfaction at the active contribution of participants, through fruitful exchanges on the theme and the other items on the agenda.

She also congratulated the APU General Secretariat on the technical support provided to the Committee.

Done in Djibouti, 13 October 2021

The political, economic and social role of African women in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Resolution adopted by the 43rd Conference
(Djibouti, 15 October 2021)

*The Committee of Women Parliamentarians of the African Parliamentary Union,
meeting on 13 October 2021 in Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti,*

Aware of the political, economic and social implications of COVID-19 in Africa,

*Concerned about the negative impact of COVID-19 on public health in general,
and maternity and contraceptive services and on the fight against AIDS and malaria in
particular,*

Considering the impact of this pandemic on the African economy,

Noting the food crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,

Considering the impact of the pandemic on education in Africa,

Considering the consequences of COVID-19 on peace and security,

*Stressing the importance of the role of African women in the face of the
pandemic,*

*Taking into account the analysis made by the United Nations on the impact of
COVID-19 (May 2020),*

Recommends:

1. Immediate easing of customs duties for all essential health products; while governments must introduce a protection policy for our populations who are suffering from rising food prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Reducing the high dependency on pharmaceutical imports by boosting national production capacity, including through intra-African and South-South cooperation, and other external partnerships;
3. Collaboration between African engineering and medical universities and local manufacturers to innovate and manufacture key medical equipment, including respirators and oxygen;
4. Establishment of platforms or the development of the existing ones for the exchange of knowledge and know-how, cross-fertilization of ideas, joint initiatives and collaborative research;

5. Establishment of African centres for disease prevention and control for the development of vaccines or medical treatments against COVID-19 and increased use of community health workers based on their past experience;
6. Analysis of infection and recovery data by gender, age, location and disability, to capture gender inequalities and differences in exposure and treatment, as an important first step to effectively supporting marginalized groups;
7. Development of research into indigenous plant medicine;
8. Measures to support micro-finance and safeguard livelihoods, such as the provision of loans, guarantees and tax relief to large enterprises and SMEs;
9. Development of recovery plans, to include the informal sector, women and other vulnerable groups, including an expansion of social protection measures and a range of regulatory and financial instruments;
10. Support for key sectors such as tourism and African airlines to ensure their viability and liquidity, including through loan guarantees and temporary tax exemptions;
11. Restructuring the debt of African countries to free up much-needed resources to deal with the pandemic and its aftermath. This should be accompanied by an increase in lending by multilateral lending agencies, including through an increase in the IMF's special drawing rights, to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide liquidity to African countries over the next two years;
12. More flexible management of the capital account, as needed, so that the financing generated by debt relief can help stabilize the financial situation;
13. Strengthening social protection systems by ensuring access to the most vulnerable groups, particularly young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, the elderly and other groups at risk;
14. Taking into account the agricultural sector as an essential part of the economy, a sector that must continue to function regardless of the emergency restrictions imposed by the pandemic;
15. The easing of possible export restrictions by Africa's partners, including bans on food exports;
16. Setting up structures to build buffer stocks for food security;
17. Strengthening energy infrastructure, internet access and the use of technology in education, including exploring with the media (especially radio) and mobile telecommunication providers, low-cost solutions to create or expand access to distance or online learning platforms;

18. Peace and ceasefire in countries in conflict so that the fight against the virus can continue unhindered, as called for by the United Nations and the African Union;
 19. Consultative and inclusive decision-making on electoral timetables to ease tensions that may arise as a result of COVID-19;
 20. Supporting UN and African humanitarian initiatives, both in the context of the fight against COVID-19 and in country-specific humanitarian aid plans;
 21. Maintaining humanitarian and pandemic initiatives to ensure that vulnerable groups such as displaced persons, refugees, migrants, women, children and the elderly and persons with disabilities are not discriminated against and that their needs are met, including their inclusion in national health systems and response plans; awareness-raising by women in major cities, transport stations and rural areas to improve immunization coverage;
 22. Step up the response to violence against women, which was exacerbated by the lockdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 23. Developing programmes for young girls during the pandemic, lockdown or school closure, to prevent repeated incidences of teenage pregnancy;
 24. Social and psychological protection for women physically or verbally abused women, as well as women separated from their families; the rates of which have increased according to the United Nations;
 25. Involvement of senior parliamentary officials and managers, both men and women, in awareness campaigns on the risks of COVID-19;
 26. Mandatory reforms in political parties to make room for women in leadership;
 27. Need to create African cultural centres to raise awareness and change harmful behaviour based on our cultures, to protect the population and prevent diseases;
 28. Remuneration of domestic work of homemakers;
 29. African women must be involved in decision-making process to adopt measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, taking gender equality into account for enacting legislation; a process that must be done by prior consultation with various social groups.
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