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20 21

#37GIMAC
REPORT



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In line with

**The African Union Summit Theme:
“Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for
Building the Africa We Want”**

**GIMAC Theme: Advancing Africa’s
Commitment to Gender Equality
through Arts and Culture**



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAPL.....	African Artists Peace Initiative
ACCORD.....	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
ACDC.....	Africa Centre for Disease Control
ACDHRS.....	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
AFAO-WAWA.....	Association des femmes de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
AfCFTA.....	African Continental Free Trade Area
ALF.....	Africa Leadership Forum
AMWA	Akina Mama wa Afrika
AU YD.....	African Union Youth Division
AU.....	African Union
AUCOSE WPS	African Union Commission Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security
AUCWGDD	African Union Commission Women, Gender and Development Directorate
AUC.....	African Union Commission
AUPSC.....	African Union Peace and Security Council
AWLN.....	African Women Leaders Network
AWOPA.....	African Women Pioneer Award
CSW.....	Commission on the Status of Women
EBWA/BPW Egypt	Egyptian Business Women Association
ECOWAS.....	Economic Community for West African States
FAS.....	Femmes Africa Solidarité
FAWE.....	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FEMNET.....	African Women's Development and Communication Network
GBV.....	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE.....	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GIMAC.....	Gender is My Agenda Campaign Network
IPAS.....	IPAS Africa Alliance
IPPF.....	International Planned Parenthood Foundation
ISF.....	Institute for Social Transformation
PAWO.....	Pan-African Women's Organization
RECs.....	Regional Economic Communities
RMT.....	Rozaria Memorial Trust
SDGEA.....	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SRH.....	Sexual Reproductive Health
STCs.....	Specialized Technical Committees
SWOFON.....	Small Scale Women Farmers Organisation in Nigeria
UN Women.....	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNECA.....	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
VAWG.....	Violence Against Women and Girls
WiLDAF.....	Women in Law and Development in Africa
WIPC.....	The Women's International Peace Centre
YWCA.....	Young Women's Christian Association Cameroon

Executive Summary

In recognition of the importance of Culture, Arts and Heritage in promoting the objectives of Agenda 2063 to achieve sustainable economic growth and development; and the need to enhance the role that the creative economy and industries will play in in this endeavour, the AU Heads of State and Government declared the Year 2021 as "The AU Year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage." In a similar vein, the thirty-fourth (34th) Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) was held from 6 - 7 February 2021 under the theme: "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want." The theme is in line with the institutional reform of the Union, where culture is viewed as the lens through which Africans view themselves and from which they draw their identity.

Against this background, the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Network convened its 37th Pre-Summit meeting from 31st January 2021 to 2 February 2021, under the theme: "Advancing Africa's Commitment to Gender Equality through Arts and Culture." The 37th GIMAC Summit was facilitated and supported by the GIMAC Steering Committee, AU Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, AU Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AU WGDD), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), MSD for Mothers, Oxfam Pan African Program, The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Action Aid. The 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit meeting highlighted the immense contribution women and girls have made to the creative sector, and in the promotion of the continent's culture and heritage.

The 2021 theme of the AU is in line with Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063, which has a vision for an Africa where work is a key ethic and value, where women play an important role, and in which traditional and religious leaders, including the youth as drivers of change, are recognised.

The 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit meeting was preceded by the Young Women's Advocacy Training Workshop, which was held on 31 January 2021. These two events were convened virtually to provide a reflective space to review and consolidate a common position on the effectiveness and efficiency of the AU and member States in mainstreaming gender equality in efforts towards ensuring that Africa's culture, arts and heritage continue to play a supportive role in its development.

The meeting brought together over 200 delegates from more than 20 countries, representing the AU, United Nations officials, Diplomatic missions, development partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector and other stakeholders. The 37th GIMAC pre-Summit meeting mainstreamed the youth agenda within its thematic areas by promoting meaningful youth participation and ensuring that recommendations from the Young Women's Policy Advocacy were collectively submitted in the outcome document for submission to the AU Summit.

Background

Historically, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government, have always placed culture at the top of their agenda and have affirmed their commitment to promote cultural cooperation. The AU has often continued to acknowledge the significant contribution of culture to the integration of societies and to the socio-economic development of the continent. The AU further notes that arts and culture play a critical role in mobilising and unifying people around common ideals and promoting African culture to build the ideals of pan-Africanism.

It is against this background that the thirty-fourth (34th) Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) was held from 6 - 7 February 2021 under the theme: "Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want." The 2021 theme for the AU Summit recognises that Africa's artistic and cultural assets can be harnessed for promoting regional integration, socio-economic development, and continental transformation.

This theme is drawn from Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063, which envisages an Africa with a strong cultural identity, values, heritage, and ethics. Furthermore, Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 focuses on strengthening the African cultural identity, values, and ethics as a critical factor for Africa's emergence on the global stage. It envisions the promotion and fostering of an African people imbued with a sense of their fundamental cultural unity, a sense of a common destiny and African identity and Pan-African consciousness. Furthermore, Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 has a vision for an Africa where work is a key ethic and value, where women play an important role, and in which traditional and religious leaders, including the youth as drivers of change, are recognised.

The 2021 theme of the African Union Summit was premised on the recognition that Africa is universally recognised for its rich arts and cultural diversity. African cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions, and values. Arts, culture, and heritage are tools for Africa to forge its pan-African agenda, and to weave in common narratives, while facilitating the continent's redefinition of its place within the global agenda.

Historically, culture, arts and heritage have featured in the African Union normative instruments, including the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter); The Banjul Charter (1981) recognises universally accepted cultural, civil, and political rights. The African Charter for Cultural Renaissance seeks to use African cultural heritage to promote human rights, social cohesion, and human development (AU 2006).

GIMAC Network held its 37th Pre-Summit meeting virtually from 31 January-2 February 2021, under the theme; "Advancing Africa's Commitment to Gender Equality through Arts and Culture." The main Pre-Summit dialogue was preceded by the 5th GIMAC Young Women's Advocacy Training Workshop, which was held on 31 January 2021. The meeting highlighted the immense contribution women and girls have made to the creative sector, and to the promotion of the continent's culture and heritage. The 37th GIMAC Summit was facilitated and supported by GIMAC Steering Committee, AU Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, AU Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AU WGDD), UN Women, UNECA, MSD for Mothers, Oxfam Pan Africa Program, The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Action Aid.

Working closely working with the AU, The GIMAC Network monitors Member States' commitments to Gender Equality, in line with the relevant legal instruments such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). Through advocacy, capacity building, engagement and visibility of young women and girls, The GIMAC Network champions the role of young women and girls, especially women in rural, marginalized, and war-affected areas, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and other harmful practices as key actors in the implementations of these commitments.

The GIMAC Network is one of the AU Commission's Women and Gender and Development Directorate (AUC WGDD)'s multi-stakeholder platforms. The network's Pre-Summit meetings are therefore acknowledged as one of the components of the AU's consultation mechanisms to ensure African citizens' concerns, and perspectives are considered at policy level.

GIMAC Pre-Summit meetings are avenues for connecting the AU to its citizens, which provide a reflective space for CSOs to review and consolidate common position on the effectiveness and efficiency of the AU and Member States in mainstreaming gender equality in the promotion of Arts, Culture and Heritage. The 37th GIMAC offered a space for strategic engagement with organs of the AU, RECs, and key stakeholders.

2.0 Overall Objective

The 37th GIMAC meeting sought to take stock of women and youth involvement in Arts and Culture, and to highlight how the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors can be gender-responsive and inclusive.

3.0 Specific Objectives

The 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit consultative meeting had the following combined objectives:

- Consolidate CSOs review of the AU legal and strategic framework on arts, culture and heritage focusing on achievements and critical gaps towards implementation;
- Propose inclusive, effective, and efficient strategies that enhance and utilize the agency and role of women and girls in realizing the vision for a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values, and ethics, building on the opportunities provided by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Silencing the Guns, and AU Reforms;
- Strengthen intergenerational and women's rights approach towards transformation of culture for greater protection of women's rights, ending violence against women and girls, especially child marriage;
- Celebrate, document, and share based practice on innovations and positive approach on culture and arts that advance gender equality;
- Provide space for African CSO's strategic engagement with AU, RECs, UN Agencies, International Organizations, and other stakeholders.

4.0 Proceedings

4.1 Young Women's Policy Advocacy Training

Nearly 100 young participants from 49 countries exchanged relevant tools and skills to advance gender equality, while tapping into their cultural heritage. Representatives from various organisations shared their knowledge and experiences: Ms Aya Chebbi, the AU Youth Envoy, Mr Samuel Norgah, Plan International, Ms. Karen Ondwasi, GIMAC, Ms Ruvarashe Miti, Youth Vibes AfriKa and Mr Taye Balogun, CARROT Co. jointly addressed several issues in relation to the theme of the year and youth in Africa. They also discussed the importance of promoting development, good governance, fostering social cohesion and promoting peace and security in Africa.

The speakers highlighted the following key issues:

- The role of arts and culture in the continent's development and stressed that these sectors compliment formal education systems. Where people's rights are violated, it is imperative to always remember our heritage.
- The importance of arts as a platform to advocate for the promotion and protection of young people's rights, including promoting peace and development. It was underscored that arts and culture are powerful tools for empowering young girls.
- The role of arts and culture in promoting social cohesion. Speakers highlighted that African arts, culture and heritage bind us together as a continent and help to bring out positive social norms.
- The need to identify and address the negative cultural norms, which militate against the advancement of the continent. The need to review and eradicate inimical cultural norms was highlighted;
- The unprecedented pandemic which has had a devastating impact on women, girls, including loss of jobs and income, school closures, strain on health facilities, increase in child marriage and a surge in cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) perpetrated mostly against women and girls, loss of income;
- The continued need for conversations about identity to redefine African youth as a collective in the 21st Century.

Speakers provided an important number of recommendations for AU, together with the UN, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and development partners as well as for the other stakeholders and actors, promoting heritage as a way of bringing about gender equality and inclusion.

Development partners were urged to implement the following measures:

- Ensure that their support to COVID-19 responses and recovery processes are anchored in the need to promote gender equality, ensuring that such responses tap into our contextual realities as Africans;
- Support the efforts of AU, Member States and CSOs who are, working with stakeholders such as traditional and cultural leaders;
- Redouble their efforts to invest in leadership in strengthening the capacity of young people so that they can effectively play their roles in driving social change in the continent;
- Continue to support the GIMAC Young Women's Network, its Youth Advocacy Training, and to develop the capacity of boys and girls to achieve gender equality.

Young people were urged to use arts and culture as a tool to achieve Agenda 2063, by engaging in the following:

- Emphasizing the importance of cultural identity and heritage as a lens that helps to define how we respond to issues;
- Using arts to challenge social and cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early and forced child marriage, as well as gender based violence (GBV);
- Continuing to be change agents in their communities to support the achievement of Agenda 2063, by having conversations about solidarity and pan-Africanism, which is anchored on "Ubuntu;"
- Joining the campaign on raising awareness about the vaccines, alongside the Africa Centres for Disease Control (A-CDC), to get more informed about the vaccines, increase trust and address scepticism around the vaccine;
- Amplifying advocacy efforts to push the gender agenda in the post-pandemic era, and to strengthen the role of young people in the COVID recovery phase, including vaccine roll-out, social protection and financial inclusion;
- Engage with the various international processes on gender equality, including the Beijing +25 process and the Generation Equality Consultations, to ensure that these processes are defined and shaped by the youth agenda. For example, young people should follow up on the implementation of the recommendations from the African Youth Beijing +25 Manifesto African Youth Manifesto, which was handed over to UN Women, following continent-wide consultations;
- Utilize the various policy spaces to advocate for youth-inclusive and gender-responsive development. For example, young people should influence policy issues through the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG), which is coordinated by UN Women and co-hosted by the Governments of Mexico and France;

Against this background, Plan International pledged to implement the following measures:

- Ensure that youth are part of the Africa Recovery Roadmap, which focuses on gender justice and youth agenda, and provide platforms for them to shape the direction of the Roadmap;
- Continue investing in leadership in strengthening the capacity of young people so that they can effectively play their roles in driving social change on the continent;
- Ensure that there is co-leadership of African youth in every institution, programme and consultative process;
- Support intergenerational dialogue to ensure that the voices of young women are heard in shaping and designing the continent's development priorities;
- Adopt and implement gender equality policies in the arts and culture space, in addition to addressing the gendered impact of COVID-19 on arts and heritage.

There was also an update on Generation Equality by Ms. Anika, FEMNET who gave an update on the past, current and future activities of the forum. Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of the conceived idea of bringing together the next generation of women's rights activists with the gender equality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action more than two decades ago. The Forum celebrates the power of women's rights activism, feminist solidarity, and youth leadership to achieve transformative change. Further information on generation equality is available: [here](#).

The advocacy training hosted six parallel breakaway sessions focussing on i) Governance; ii) Peace and Security; iii) Human Rights; iv) Health; v) Education; and vi) Economic Empowerment). Participants reflected on how arts and culture can be integrated into each thematic area. Overall, the group discussions during the GIMAC Young Women's Advocacy Training highlighted the importance of strengthening youth institutions and networks.

The deliberations of the thematic breakaway sessions and the subsequent reporting of each session defined critical measures and set a strategic way forward to improve further the planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and assessment of the 2021 AU theme of the year with a view to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of AU commitments.

The training concluded with a presentation of the GIMAC Young Women's Network activities, updates and highlights of their work, presentation of the outcome statement and Pledge of Commitment from the GIMAC Young Women's Network.

THE CONSULTATIONS LEADING TO THE MANIFESTO WERE UNDERTAKEN BY THE OFFICE OF THE AU YOUTH ENVOY, AND IT RESULTED IN TEN KEY DEMANDS, WHICH RANGE FROM YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE AND SECURITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROCESSES, HEALTH, TECHNOLOGY, ARTS AND CULTURE

4.2 Official Opening of 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit Meeting

The opening session was moderated by Dr. Gumbonzvanda, a member of the GIMAC Steering Committee and the AU Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage. The official opening of the 37th GIMAC pre-Summit dialogue was undertaken by H.E. Mme. Bineta Diop, the AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. Speakers in the opening session included Ms. Martha Muhwezi, The Chairperson of the GIMAC Network, and Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE); Ms. Karen Ondwasi, the Chairperson of the GIMAC Young Women Network; Ms. Guiomar Alonso, Regional Adviser, Culture. West Africa Sahel UNESCO and His Majesty Mfumi Difima, Chief from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Member of the SADC Council of Traditional Authorities (SADC COTLA) & the African Union of Traditional Leaders (AUTA).

Mrs Muhwezi reflected on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and noted that while physical travel has been curtailed and despite the unfinished work of promoting digital equality, the pandemic had created an opportunity for connecting virtually, thereby making it easier for many people to participate in GIMAC Network events. Dr. Gumbonzvanda further applauded the GIMAC Steering Committee for institutionalizing the GIMAC Young Women's Network and acknowledged the historical role of young people in the political and social transformation of the continent.

Dr. Gumbonzvanda added that the recommendations from the GIMAC Young Women Advocacy Training would be incorporated into the main document emerging from the GIMAC Pre-Summit consultative meeting. The Moderator encouraged young people to be the custodians of heritage, identity, and pan-Africanism, and urged them to utilize global spaces to showcase their culture and confront the negative stereotypes about Africa. She urged participants to use art and culture to re-define their narrative about their place in the global economy.

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DR GUMBONZVANDA

Providing the opening remarks for the 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit meeting, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat; the AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, H.E. Mme. Bineta Diop, recognised the role of arts, culture, and heritage in bringing about sustainable development, regional integration, and prosperity. Furthermore, H.E. Diop underlined the critical roles of arts and culture in achieving the objectives of Agenda 2063. The opening remarks referred to Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 which called for strong cultural values and ethics, where women, youth and traditional leaders are recognised as key drivers of change. The AUC Chairperson's remarks referred to the various instruments adopted by the African Union to integrate culture into its processes, including the AU Charter for African Renaissance 2006, and the African Plan of Action on Arts and Culture.

The remarks also highlighted how African women have historically organised to collectively fight colonialism even before the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In line with the Maputo Protocol, the AU, RECs, and Member States were urged to remove cultural barriers and gender barriers to culture and heritage.

Commending artists, in particular female artists who continue to shape the fabric of society by becoming catalysts for social and political development, the AUC Chairperson's remarks underlined the importance of integrating gender into the arts and culture. There was a call for stories being told in Africa and about the continent to be inclusive of gendered experiences by intentionally providing a platform for women to tell their stories.

The AUC Chairperson's remarks referred to efforts by the AU Commission to promote gender parity in leadership, through ensuring 50-50 gendered representation within the Commission leadership. The AUC Chairperson also underlined the importance of accelerating action towards peace in Africa with full recognition of African heritage.

Referring to the situations where culture has been abused to violate women and girls' rights and stressed, the keynote remarks stressed the need for an Africa where women and girls are valued and recognized. The Chairperson recognized the role of strong African women who fought slavery, colonialism, and subjugation, and shaped discourses on pan-Africanism. Arts and culture were also acknowledged as vehicles for promoting peace, security, and development. In concluding the remarks on behalf of the AUC Chairperson, H.E. Mme. Bineta Diop underscored the importance of using arts and culture and arts as a force for good. She wished the participants fruitful deliberations and declared the 37th GIMAC officially opened.

The Chairperson of the GIMAC Young Women's Network, Ms Karen Ondwasi called for the integration of arts into education and health systems. She indicated that the GIMAC Young Women's Network pledged to incorporate art as an advocacy tool, and to raise awareness on social, economic, and political issues. Ms Ondwasi applauded artists and called for the African continent to put the arts at the centre of development of the continent.

His Majesty Mfumu Difima's remarks stressed the importance of traditional authorities in cultural revitalization and in supporting the different policies and frameworks to find solutions to the continent's challenges. He emphasized the need to decolonize African'sAfricans' mindsets and to revitalize African culture and heritage, adding that culture and heritage are critical in facilitating community development. Underlining the essential role of Africa's traditional authorities are essential to the development and social advancement of the continent, he cited the example of the African Union of Traditional Authorities (AUTA) and the SADC Council for Traditional Leaders and the Council of Traditional Leaders and Authorities (SADC COTLA)), which collaborate with Member States and CSOs to address harmful social norms that perpetuate child marriage and are involved in fighting against early and forced child marriage (EFCM), female genital mutilation (FGM) and other forms of violence against women.

Additionally, AUTA also works with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to improve land policies in Africa and strengthen women's access to land. In conclusion, His Majesty Mfumu Difima also outlined the role of traditional medicine in public health and further called for its integration into African health strategies.

There was also a strong session on **Women Champions on Gender Equality** moderated by Dr. Gumbonzvanda.

Ms. Letty Chiwara, UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, AU and UNECA in her response to the following *"You are an extraordinary woman leader in multilateral institutions, leading UN Women Africa for many years and now as representative to African Union and UNECA. In your life experience and work, what is it about your culture and heritage that rooted you and gave perspective to your personal decision making as a leader? How have you leveraged the role of culture as UN Women to transform approaches to gender equality on the continent and beyond?"*

Ms Chiwara spoke about her experiences growing up, with a supportive father who allowed girl children to go to school, as well as a hardworking mother who was enterprising. One important lesson she learned from this experience is the critical role of leadership and male champions in advancing gender equality. MrsMs Chiwara highlighted the fact that her father's decision to send the three girls to school played a critical role in shaping her future and ensuring that she becomesbecame a global leader, who has worked in multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations.

Ms Chiwara also discussed the ambivalent nature of culture, which has both positive and negative aspects. She underlined that while there are numerous cultural practices that require immediate eradication, it is equally important to find the positive aspects of our culture and appreciate those that are useful.

Ms Chiwara also spoke about the role of the UN Women programmes, in addressing the root causes of discrimination, lack of opportunities, education, and fostering women's economic empowerment. She added that UN Women programmes include a focus on ending violence against women and girls, peace and security and women's economic empowerment. Ms Chiwara concluded by stressing that much needs to be done to address the challenges that women artists face in a male-dominated cultural environment. She called on African women artists to use their art as a tool to provoke social consciousness.

Similarly, Ms Victoria Maloka, Acting Director, AUC Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AUC WGDD) responded to the following question: "You unapologetically brand African all the time with your dress code and your approach to negotiating in corridors of power. We know that our institutions are male dominated and patriarchy, but you exemplify being a femocrat (a feminist within a bureaucracy). Can you share the insights and advice on how one can remain an assertive leader, and yet remain true to your identity? What is your advice to young feminists and gender champions on how to remain African and rooted and be effective in multilateral systems?"

Ms. Victoria Maloka began her remarks by reflecting on the politics of hair and appearance that women always face in their various professions, including the creative sector. Ms Maloka underlined the importance of women being unapologetic about who they are, and to embrace their authentic selves, when driving social change.

Citing her grandmother who was Queen Victoria Maloka, the Acting Director for the AUC WGDD noted that women have always played leadership roles in society. She stressed the importance of raising awareness so that people can understand the value of equality. MmeMs Maloka also emphasized the importance of understanding the drivers and causes of cultural resistance and stressed the importance of demystifying the narrative that women want to kick men out. She added that when advocating for gender equality, it is important to speak to people's hearts, and address their fears and concerns. She stressed the imperative of understanding both men and women's needs, as a strategy to address the resistance to the gender equality agenda. Recognizing the value of partnerships, MmeMs Maloka also urged gender advocates to engage men and traditional authorities as change agents.

During the conversation, speakers noted that although menstruation is a natural occurrence for women and girls, millions are denied the right to manage their monthly menstrual cycle in a dignified and healthy way. This results in challenges such as young girls dropping out of school. Removing the shame and stigma around menstruation required addressing the broader systemic factors that link menstrual health with well-being, education, human rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls. Ms Maloka underlined the importance of supporting girls, especially those in rural communities and under-privileged communities to overcome obstacles to their menstrual health.

These stories of inspiring achievements, but also of challenging experiences shed light on the issues still ahead on the path to gender equality. The speakers' testimonies also underscored the importance of actively promoting women's empowerment, protecting women's rights and combating gender inequalities for women in leadership positions.

"when advocating for gender equality, it is important to speak to people's hearts, and address their fears and concerns"

MS VICTORIA MALOKA

4.3 Perspectives in addressing gender inequalities in the Arts, Culture and Heritage space

The Moderator for this session was Fardossa Hussein, a Photographer from Somalia. Nebila Abdulmelik, Creative Writer and Communications, Ethiopia. Speakers included Ms Maimouna Dembele; Ms. Fardosa Hussien, Photographer, Somalia; Ms. Sitawa Namwalie, Poet and Development Practitioner and Author, Kenya and Dr Rosemary Olive-Mbone, Global Black Economic Empowerment, Cameroon. The Contributor was Prof Msia Kibona Clark, a Professor of African Studies at Howard University, USA.

This session highlighted the following:

- Arts have a role in regeneration and at a local level can be used as a tool within wider community development programmes. They can create opportunities for political expression, community dialogue, shared cultural experiences, and civic engagement;
- Across time and space, arts and culture have shaped society's values, attitudes, opinions, and experiences;
- Art facilitates communication, and generates social cohesion and collaboration, as it allows people from different cultures and different times to communicate with each other via images, sounds and stories;
- Women use various forms of arts, including theatre, music, photography, films, and comedy to challenge patriarchy. Often, women use their gender as a lens and their work to amplify women's voices, issues, and perspectives;
- Arts and culture are being used to positively change society's perceptions of women and facilitate a rethink of previously held beliefs and norms;
- Women artists are breaking down barriers, forging new paths, and expanding possibilities for future generations of women by harnessing the power of art and to radically shifting the narratives around Africa;
- Unfortunately, despite the evidence that art can be a powerful tool for transformation at the personal, interpersonal, and organisation levels, arts have been an underutilized instrument in promoting development;
- Artists require freedom to imagine, re-create and distribute diverse cultural expressions free of governmental censorship, political interference or the pressures of non-state actors. Artists become bolder and more creative in environments where they are not censored, as in the case of South Africa.

The following recommendations emerged from this session:

- Ensure that women's stories are told, and their perspectives are seen and heard. This should be accompanied by efforts to amplify support for women artists, especially young women, while recognising their activism;
- CSOs, working with the family and community members should continue to transform mindsets to address gender roles. This can be done when we start telling boy and girl children that they are equal;
- Respect the creative sector, by collaborating with artists in advocacy efforts for gender equality and sustainable development;
- Recognise the powerful role of the arts and demystify the perception that arts are a profession that is taken up by people who failed school;
- Artistic freedom is critical to the well-being of society. To this end, African governments must create spaces for artists to thrive, through enacting and adopting policies that promote and protect artists;
- CSOs should strengthen and support cultural rights, working with governments, artists, curators, and other actors in other cultural sectors to inform them about their rights and obligations.

4.4 Focus on Women in decision making and peace processes

This session on Peace and Security and Governance was moderated by Ms Juliet Were, Deputy Director of the Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC) and Ms. Chipso Bangira, Akina Mama wa Afrika. Speakers included Ms. Rosali Kobo-Beth, Secretary General, Association of Central African Women Lawyers (CAWL) & Spokesperson for 'I Londo Awè' (We are already standing); Ms. Sophie D. Ogutu, Coordinator, Support Women Artists Now (SWAN); & World March of Women (WMW), Kenya; Ms. Ngozi Cole, Akina Mama Wa Afrika; Ms. Caroline Kibos, Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice (CIGPG), South Sudan. The Contributor was Ms. Aisha Augie, a Photographer from Nigeria.

'Arts are important in highlighting gendered experiences of conflict. For example, photography plays a role in documenting women stories, and can provide insights into how they are experiencing and navigating conflict'

This session raised the following issues:

- During conflict, it is women and girls who are disproportionately affected. Women are particularly affected because they do not enjoy equal status with men in any society;
- Where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict, they will be exacerbated during conflict;
- Gender-based and sexual violence have increasingly become weapons of warfare and are one of the defining characteristics of contemporary armed conflict. Rape, forced impregnation, forced abortion, trafficking and sexual slavery are elements of contemporary conflict;
- There is still under-representation of women in decision-making for peacebuilding, peace-making, and conflict resolution. In the Central African Republic (CAR), although women are participating in conflict resolution processes, they are still playing secondary roles in decision-making;
- Artists and communities can contribute to conflict resolution in all stages of the conflict cycle, through creative expression that bridges divides. The creative industry has an important role to play in conflict resolution, dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation. Arts can support movement towards coexistence. For example, during the Kenya 2007-2008 post-election violence, the role of artists was critical in fostering peacebuilding. Various artists used songs, poetry, theatre as strategies to unify the country;
- Arts are important in highlighting gendered experiences of conflict. For example, photography plays a role in documenting women stories, and can provide insights into how they are experiencing and navigating conflict;
- Apart from telling women's stories, arts and culture can be used as powerful tools for highlighting the experience of citizens. Arts often play an invaluable role in uniting and reconciling adversaries. Photographers have played roles in unifying communities in conflict such as in Nigeria where photographers took photos of Christians protecting Muslims, which was a powerful way of addressing inter-religious conflict.

'Arts are important in highlighting gendered experiences of conflict. For example, photography plays a role in documenting women stories, and can provide insights into how they are experiencing and navigating conflict'

The following recommendations emerged from this session:

- The AU and Member States must continue to celebrate artists, by providing artists with the freedom to explore a wide range of emotions that would otherwise be hindered by society;
- The AU, Member States and the international community should also help support arts-based processes as strategies for conflict transformation, to support formal peace-making and peace building processes;
- The peace-making, peacebuilding and conflict resolution fields should employ artistic processes that directly involve artists in conflict transformation, instead of only focusing on traditional and technical methods of addressing conflicts. The conflict resolution field should broaden the scope of its work to become more inclusive of artistic processes to reach a larger audience;
- Integrate art education into the national curriculum as a strategy of fostering social cohesion and promoting reconciliation;
- CSO should play important roles in supporting women in political parties, including raising awareness on issues of under-representation of women, in addition to using arts to address competition between women in political spaces;
- There is a need for gender mainstreaming in the media, especially making efforts to support the work of female artists.

4.5 Beijing+25 Review

The UN Women Representative to Ethiopia, the AU and UNECA, Ms Letty Chiwara provided an update on Generation Equality, an inter-generational and inter-partnership forum which seeks to advance the Beijing Platform agenda. It was created under the leadership of UN Women, together with other international partners, and with the support of Member States. Generation Equality is a movement building forum, and it seeks to ensure that the voices of the under-represented are heard.

Recognising the vision of the Beijing declaration would require young people's active involvement, participation, innovation, energy, and tenacity. The consultations for Generation Equality are organised along seven (7) action coalitions or themes, i.e., i) Feminist movements; ii) women, peace and security, iii) human rights; iv) ending violence against women, v) sexual and reproductive health, and vi) feminist action for climate justice; and vii) technology and innovation for gender equality.

The governments of Mexico and France have hosted physical events of Generation Equality. It is hoped that the physical events will happen in 2021, however if it is virtual, access will be open to participants from various African countries. There will be satellite sessions hosted by South Africa, Kenya, and Senegal. For example, SA is leading thematic action coalition on ending violence against women. Burkina Faso, Kenya, and South Africa are leading some of the themes. All UN Women Country Offices and youth organisations are leading the efforts of coordinating participants during the consultations on Beijing + 25. One of the calls is for UN Women and Member States to mobilize Generation Equality to work on the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls. Further information on generation equality is available [here](#).

4.6 Focus on women and girl's economic empowerment and the right to livelihoods

The session was chaired by Dr. Amany Asfour, Chairperson of the President, African Alliance for Women Empowerment (AFRAWE) ~ Egyptian Businesswomen Business Women Association (EBWA). Speakers included Ms. Tomi Odunsi, Award Winning Actor, Singer & Songwriter & CEO/ and MD of CGTMEDIA Ltd; Ms. Esther George, from the Small-Scale Women Farmers Organisation in Nigeria (SWOFON); Mr. Lazarus Mwale, Regional Programme Manager, 18+ Ending Marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa, Plan International; Mr. Jonah K Gokova, Board Chair, Community Member, Padare/Enkundleni/Men's Forum on Gender and Ms. Zainab Arah Ishaq, Small Scale Women Farmers Organization (SWOFON), Nigeria.

This session highlighted the following issues:

- Africa is a hub of cultural heritage and diversity. The richness of the African creative sector is exemplified by the expansive content produced in sectors such as music, cinema, theatre, poetry, fashion. The cultural and creative industries have a role in economic development. For example, the cultural industry is \$2.25 billion annually, yet Africa only controls 1.9 percent of this amount;
- Cultural industries are providing Africa with the opportunity to diversify its economy while at the same time stimulating social, cultural and political development;
- The creative industry is set to transform under the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which seeks to advance intra-African trade by making Africa a single market of 1.2 billion people and a cumulative GDP over \$3.4 trillion;

- Cultural industries can be strategic tools for revenue and employment generation. To this end, the cultural and creative industry in Africa must be well-remunerated. The interface between creativity, culture and economy requires creation of jobs and protection of artists and creatives;
- Although the creative sector contributes to economic growth, it still suffers from high levels of precarious work. This is exacerbated by the gendered exclusion in art, coupled with the reality that many female artists do not know how to market their work;
- Currently, Africa consumes more than 70% of foreign music, films, and entertainment. This requires amplification of efforts to expose Africa's creative products to the world;
- Additionally, there is still a lot more to be done to ensure that the African continent is disseminated within the continent. Distribution remains an issue for many creative industries in Africa, especially in countries with harsher economic climates.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the creative sector by eroding revenues for artists. However, the pandemic has compelled African creatives to adapt their strategies of dissemination, including using virtual means of transmission;
- Government policy has a role to play in the success or failure of the creative industry. African leadership is required to safeguard and revitalize the creative sector in the wake of the pandemic;
- The COVID-19 pandemic has also worsened the burden of unpaid care work on small scale farmers.

The following recommendations emerged from this session:

- The AU, Member States, and private sector should implement socio-economic policies and programmes to address the precariousness of the industry, and to cushion artists, especially female creatives;
- The AU and Member States should put in place measures to ensure the issue of gender equality is at the centre of promoting culture and heritage. This includes reducing the precariousness of the cultural industry, as well as increasing the visibility and status of women's cultural activities and products;
- The AU and its Member States should invest in agro ecologyagroecology to increase income and promote well-being, including advancing the use of natural fertilizers, promoting indigenous ways of farming, in addition to developing policies to sustain agro-ecologyagroecology for sustaining food systems and enhancing nutrition security in Africa;
- African Governments should prioritize local food systems, promote agricultural extension, and invest in indigenous knowledge for small-scale agriculture as strategies to enhance food security, boost African economies and promote climate change adaptation;
- The AU and its Member States should address the issue of unpaid care work for women to release women to focus on agro ecologyagroecology. This should be accompanied by investment on skills development for women in storage, value-addition, and marketing.

- African governments should strengthen domestic financing of gender-responsive and sustainable development, characterized by inclusive and sector-wide approaches for promoting women's socio-economic empowerment;
- The private sector should promote inclusivity in the creative industry, and to consider it as a fully-fledged profession. This should be accompanied by investments in strong infrastructures and systems to improve and sustain the industry.
- For the creative industries, there is a need to support African content,; especially because Africans are the people who will relate the most to the content; produced on the continent. Intra-African trade, and distribution of content is; therefore vital;
- CSOs, community-based organisations and African citizens should prioritize; the cultural and creative products from Africa, in addition to protecting our cultural; heritage and intellectual property;
- CSOs, think tanks and CBOs should support the efforts of the AU and Member; States to generate gender-disaggregated data on the creative industry;
- CSOs should support artists through mentoring, coaching, capacity building; and connecting them with their market and benefactors;
- Artists must join communities of practice, engaging in networking and peer-to; peer learning, as well as identifying platforms to continue telling their stories,; including showcasing their art in public and exclusive events for free to enhance the; social network.

4.7 Focus on Human Rights and Culture

The session was moderated by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies ACDHRS and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF). Speakers included Dr. Lazarus Mwale, from Plan International, Zambia; Mr Jonah Gokova of the Padare/ Enkundleni (Men's Forum on Gender (Men's Forum on Gender) and contributions by Ms. Anika Dorothy Jenne, the East Africa Coordinator of Amplify Girls.

This session highlighted the following issues:

- Although child marriage is a huge problem globally, it is more prominent in; sub-Saharan Africa. Girls who marry young are often denied a range of human; rights: many must discontinue their education, face serious health risks from early; and multiple pregnancies, and suffer sexual and domestic violence;
- Furthermore, child marriage exposes girls and young women to violence,; including marital rape, sexual and domestic violence, and emotional abuse;

- Child marriage is a barrier to socio-economic growth and sustainable development. Agenda 2063, the African Union's 50-year action plan for development, recognises that child marriage is a major impediment to regional development and prosperity;
- Cultural drivers of child marriage include the gatekeepers who sanction early and forced child marriage. Customary practices, religious beliefs, and weak justice mechanisms fuel the practice of child marriage. Traditional beliefs and inimical customary practices which perpetuate unequal gender roles often tend to sustain and exacerbate the practice of child marriage;
- Socio-economic drivers of child marriage are related to poverty. Most girls that are married off early are likely to come from poorer households with limited education. Furthermore, girls from poor families, with limited food and necessities, may view marriage as an economic survival strategy;
- There are intersections between child marriage and limited access to livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic is worsening this situation, as it is estimated that the pandemic is likely to result in 13 million child brides per year;
- A whole-of-society and collaborative approach is critical to eliminate child marriage. It is based on the premise that for more than 25 years, the Padare/ Men's Forum on Gender has been working with men, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and other community members to address negative masculinity.

The following were recommendations emerging from this session:

- African leadership is essential for effectively preventing and eliminating child marriage. This includes ensuring legal reform and enforcement, providing access to quality education, providing sexual and reproductive health information and services, promoting girls' empowerment, and challenging harmful social norms;
- In addition to developing comprehensive national strategies to end child marriage, all the relevant stakeholders, including community and religious leaders, educators, health care workers, police, prosecutors, and the judiciary, government officials, media, parents, must commit to their role in ending child marriage;
- In addition to addressing SGBV, African Governments should localize and promote a community driven approach to advance gender equality in the cultural spaces;
- CSOs should adopt a gender transformative strategy to transform inimical social norms, engaging men and boys to change attitudes towards ECFM. CSOs and child rights actors must explore innovative social change projects, including the "nhanga" concepts which is being spearheaded by the Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT), to strengthen girls' agency and increase awareness on sexual and reproductive health (SRH);
- CSOs, CBOs, traditional and cultural leaders should empower men to raise their awareness on gender equality and responsiveness, including strengthening their capacity to effectively address violence against women and girls (VAWG);
- Men of quality are not afraid of equality, hence the imperative for male role models who can comfortably promote transformation. The importance of conversations in private and in public on ending VAWG is critical;

- Educational curricula should prepare Africa for the ever evolving social and political economy, including the creative economy. Strategies including offering a compulsory course on Gender Mainstreaming and Equality at schools, from primary school to secondary and university levels;
- The family and society should re-visit the socialization processes to ensure that girls and boys are brought up equally to believe in themselves. This should be augmented by parents supporting their children's career paths in the creative industry;

4.8 Integrating Culture into Education for African Women and girls

The session was co-moderated by Ms. Juliet Kimotho, Regional Advocacy Officer, FAWE (Education) and Ms Suzanne Majani, Policy Advisor, Ipas Africa Alliance .. Speakers included Mr. Damon Wamara, Chairperson East Africa Child Rights Network; ProfMs. Emily Achieng'Achieng' Akuno, Professor of Music at the Technical University of Kenya and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Affairs; Dr. Selamawit Eshetu, Programme Officer, International Planned Parenthood Federation; and Mr Temitayo Erogbogbo, Leveraging Culture and Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship in Health: Global Advocacy Director, MSD for Mothers. The Contributors included; Ms. Nokutenda Magama, from the Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) and GIMAC Young Women Network as well as and Ms. Angela Nguku from, Executive Director, White Ribbon Alliance, Kenya.

This session highlighted the following observations:

- Arts and culture play critical roles in negotiating our social, economic, and political relationships, and helping us to develop social and cultural intelligence.; They are tools to forge collaboration, tolerance, and identity;
- Arts and culture contribute to sustainable development. For example, in 2013,; about 4 billion Kenyan Shillings (KES) worth of creative goods were exported from Kenya, including visual arts. This includes the informal sector which has not benefited from significant investment and high-level skills development;
- Education plays invaluable roles in promoting cultural values and providing analytical skills;

The following were recommendations emerging from this session:

- The education sector should increase investment into arts and culture; education, based on well-articulated policies, accompanied by the necessary resources. African Governments were urged to enhance quality education and; training in arts and culture. This includes providing basic literacy in arts; accompanied by support towards the professional development of those in the; arts and culture sectors;
- Arts and culture should be mainstreamed into the educational curricula; Education institutions, think tanks, academic centres and CSOs should engage in; extensive research on culture and language to understand about the richness of; African culture and how we can use culture to empower women and girls;
- African governments, working in collaboration with the private sector and artists' associations, should facilitate the reward and compensation of creatives, ensuring that females occupy the value chain of the creative industry including being producers, decision-makers, and directors.

4.9 Integrating Culture into Health for African Women and girls

This session was moderated by Dr. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage and Chief Executive, Rozaria Memorial Trust. Speakers included Ms. Keiso Matashane-Marite, Gender Affairs Officer, Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division of UNECA; and Dr. Ahmed Ogwell Ouma, from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC); Khalai Jimase, Visual & Tribal Artist and Dr Rochelle Burgess, Deputy Director, UCL Centre for Global Non-Communicable Diseases, UCL Institute for Global Health

This session highlighted the following:

- The issue of culture and health is reflected in the way in which culture practices such as female genital mutilation become sustained and enduring. Eradicating practices such as FGM and child marriage, requires confronting inimical cultural practices that perpetuate these practices;
- Culture has a role in the preservation of power imbalances between groups and between men and women, hence the importance of mainstreaming of gender into cultural heritage;
- Culture can be employed as a tool to address maternal mortality, while recognising the gendered roles of production and reproduction;
- The importance of embracing our culture and values that are still useful, was reiterated. This includes scaling up cultural values that recognise the power and agency of women and girls in health;

- For example, there are innovative strategies for promoting women and girls' empowerment, which include RMT's use of "nhanga" as a safe space for young girls and women, where they can access information on SRH education, in addition to challenging issues affecting women and girls, such as child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV);
- Culture has a tremendous influence on health behaviour. For example, the ongoing discussions on the COVID-19 vaccine are rooted in the way people perceive social and economic realities. Furthermore, the role of culture can be discerned in past discussions on the polio vaccine which had a lot of backlash in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya as people suspected the polio vaccine was used for population control;
- The basis of the AU's responses to COVID-19 was premised on African values, which meant that African culture, heritage, and values played a role in shaping the strategies and actions;
- Africa experienced the first wave in March 2020, and the second wave in January 2021. Numbers of COVID-19 infections have remained relatively low despite the continent's few resources;
- There was an emphasis on Africa leading the response efforts, as African Heads of State provided leadership, direction, and political muscle. Since the pandemic started, the Bureau of Heads of State has met several times to provide clear directions on how to activate agency in confronting the pandemic;
- African Ministers of different government departments, including Health, Transport, Gender, Foreign Affairs, Economic Development and Finance, have also met regularly to provide support and direction to guide the response to the pandemic;
- The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the importance of collaboration between governments and non-state actors. The AU and its member states have continued to engage with multi-sectoral experts to ensure that our collective wisdom, knowledge, and experiences are brought to bear in responding to the pandemic;
- Africa has been using its knowledge base to design and deliver COVID-19 messages to the public. For example, the Africa Centre for Disease Control (A-CDC) has been supporting the deployment of community health workers across workers as a strategy of integrating culture and heritage into the COVID-19 response. This includes promoting research on African therapies and providing guidance on protecting all caregivers.

Recommendations from this session included the following:

- AU Member States should fully implement the Maputo protocol to protect bodily integrity, and to provide Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education;
- CSOs, CBOs and educational institutions should utilize African culture and heritage to strengthen the health of women and girls in Africa, through conducting outreach programmes in rural areas to explain and explore the issues that people confront when it comes to health;

- The AU and its Member states must provide finances to local health systems and support women engagement in promoting community health;
- In line with embracing a hybrid approach to health, the AU, African Governments, and health service providers should include traditional leaders, indigenous knowledge systems and community health practitioners in the public health systems;
- The AU, Member States, health services providers and CSOs should amplify efforts towards training and supporting traditional birth attendants, midwives in SRH. AU Member States should invest more in digital infrastructure for harnessing the role of culture in SRHS;
- AU Member States should strengthen their national health systems and amplify the provision of sexual and reproductive health services (SRHS), by tapping into the role of culture and cultural leaders, and by designing strategies to enable women and youth to access family planning services.

4.10 37th GIMAC Closing Session

Ms Andrew Patience (AP) recited a poem, titled **“Teaching Daughters How to Breathe”** and Yara Oyuda called on the GIMAC Network to push for more partnerships with Ministries of Youth from North Africa so that there could be more representation of North African youth in within the GIMAC Network processes and meetings. She also emphasized the importance of free movement of persons and free education across borders to enable cross-cultural fusion and awareness as well as promote diversity. Ms. Oyuda reiterated the importance of strengthening the representation, engagement, and participation of men in the GEWE agenda, as a strategy of confronting inimical social and cultural practices.

Remarks by Mrs. Annie Rebecca Kenda Bakjika, Director and Coordinator, Ministry of Gender, Family and Children-Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Citing the role of strong African women who have fought against colonialism, Ms Annie Rebecca Kenda Bakjika, Director and Coordinator, Ministry of Gender, Family and Children-Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) acknowledged the role of culture in advancing democratic development. She added that women's grassroots organisations are critical for women's empowerment given their long history and recognised cultural role in Africa.

Mme. Khady Fall Tall, President, The West African Women's Association (AFAWO/WAWA) cautioned against overlooking negative aspects of African culture, which marginalise, inhibit, and subordinate women. She called for the transformation and eradication of inimical cultural practices. Mrs BakjikaShe concluded by underscoring the imperative for homegrown models that make use of historical and cultural experiences as strategies to promote sustainable development efforts in Africa.

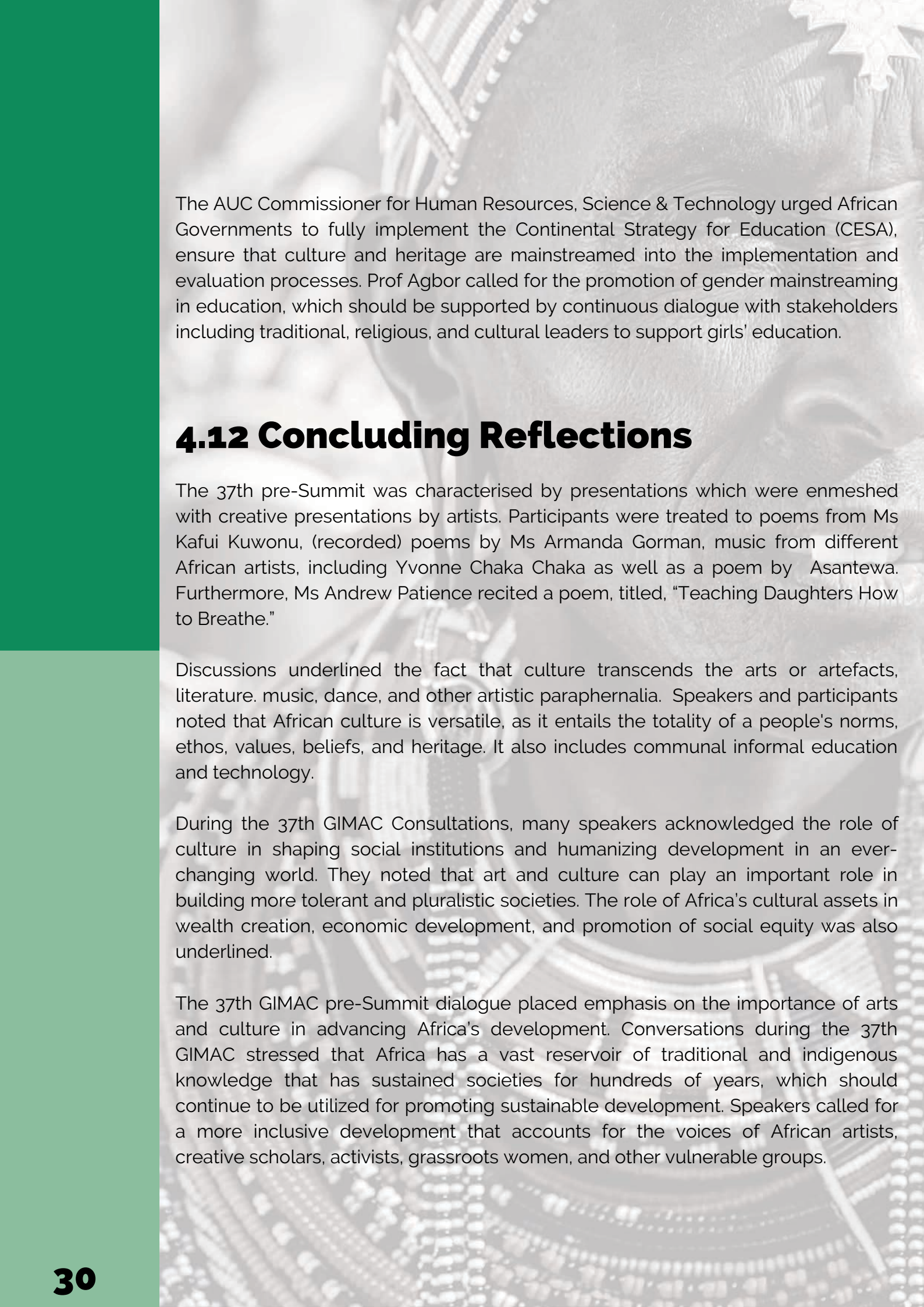
The AUC Special Envoy on WPS **The GIMAC Network Vice Chairperson, Mme Kafui Kuwonu, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)** thanked participants for an engaging 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit dialogue. She indicated that the Chairperson of the GIMAC Network, Ms. Martha Muhwezi will write to the AU OSE WPS to present the 37TH GIMAC Outcome Document to the relevant AU Departments, including A-CDC, AUC WGDD, various commissions as well as STCs. These issues will also be included for discussions before the AU Summit. Over the past years, GIMAC recommendations have been taken on board for consideration during AU summits. Mme Diop pledged Kafui assured the participants that the AUC OSE WPS will work together with GIMAC to make sure that the meeting Outcome Document will be tabled to the AU Chairperson, H.E. Moussa Faki Heads of Summit meeting.

4.11 Awards Ceremony: African Women Pioneer Award

The Civil Society African Women Pioneer Award (AWOPA) is awarded to gender champions and it is awarded during the January/ February pre-summit meeting. The February 2021 AWOPA was awarded to Commissioner Amira Elfadil- AU Commissioner for Social Affairs and Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor; H.E Minata Samate Cessouma, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs; the AUC Commissioner for Human Resources, Science & Technology for their contribution to the gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) agenda. The awards were presented by the Chairperson of the GIMAC Steering Committee, Ms Martha Muhwezi.

In accepting her award, Commissioner Amira Elfadil mentioned that the AU is still implementing the project on ending child marriage and addressing FGM and maternal mortality. The Commissioner called for the mobilization of governments and CSOs to advance women and girls issues to co-create solutions for integrating culture and heritage in development processes.

In accepting her award, Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor stressed the power of education to facilitate social, economic, and political transformation. She urged African Governments to ensure that women and girls are part of the sustainable development agenda, and further highlighted that Agenda 2063 recognises the role of women and girls.



The AUC Commissioner for Human Resources, Science & Technology urged African Governments to fully implement the Continental Strategy for Education (CESA), ensure that culture and heritage are mainstreamed into the implementation and evaluation processes. Prof Agbor called for the promotion of gender mainstreaming in education, which should be supported by continuous dialogue with stakeholders including traditional, religious, and cultural leaders to support girls' education.

4.12 Concluding Reflections

The 37th pre-Summit was characterised by presentations which were enmeshed with creative presentations by artists. Participants were treated to poems from Ms Kafui Kuwonu, (recorded) poems by Ms Armanda Gorman, music from different African artists, including Yvonne Chaka Chaka as well as a poem by Asantewa. Furthermore, Ms Andrew Patience recited a poem, titled, "Teaching Daughters How to Breathe."

Discussions underlined the fact that culture transcends the arts or artefacts, literature, music, dance, and other artistic paraphernalia. Speakers and participants noted that African culture is versatile, as it entails the totality of a people's norms, ethos, values, beliefs, and heritage. It also includes communal informal education and technology.

During the 37th GIMAC Consultations, many speakers acknowledged the role of culture in shaping social institutions and humanizing development in an ever-changing world. They noted that art and culture can play an important role in building more tolerant and pluralistic societies. The role of Africa's cultural assets in wealth creation, economic development, and promotion of social equity was also underlined.

The 37th GIMAC pre-Summit dialogue placed emphasis on the importance of arts and culture in advancing Africa's development. Conversations during the 37th GIMAC stressed that Africa has a vast reservoir of traditional and indigenous knowledge that has sustained societies for hundreds of years, which should continue to be utilized for promoting sustainable development. Speakers called for a more inclusive development that accounts for the voices of African artists, creative scholars, activists, grassroots women, and other vulnerable groups.

'the role of cultural practices and values in sustainable development must be explicitly recognised, supported, and integrated into planning and policy in a systematic and comprehensive way'

Participants also cautioned against valorising African culture, and stressed that negative traditional practices, beliefs, and laws that are harmful to women and derogatory of their status will need to be changed. While acknowledging that culture is critical for evolving more holistic development outcomes, it was equally stressed that culture should not be used to justify any form of exclusion and oppression. Therefore, there was a call to challenge negative traditional practices that violate the rights of women and girls and impede social progress. Harmful traditional practices such as FGM, EFCM, and other forms of violence against women and girls, were put under the spotlight.

This importance of gender in the design and implementation of cultural policies was also underlined. Speakers stressed that women's voices must be heard and useful cultural practices that traditionally protected women and girls should be considered in designing programmes to address gender inequality and to empower women in Africa.

Discussions during the 37th GIMAC Summit called for sustained support of women's grassroots organisations that facilitate women's collective and individual empowerment. Furthermore, it was underlined that efforts to end cultural and traditional practices harmful to women must involve and address men, and that there should be systematic encouragement and support of collective action among women.

Noting that the 37th GIMAC took place in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, participants also called for the incorporation of Africa's cultural heritage into the continent's fight against the pandemic. Participants highlighted the importance of valuing the contribution of indigenous and traditional remedies and strategies in health promotion. Furthermore, there was a call for African governments to take decisive measures to support the cultural sector, which has been badly hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

Another key message emerging from the 37th GIMAC pre-Summit meeting was the need to address the precariousness of work, as well as the unequal and uneven burden of work in the cultural sector. Speakers called for the importance of addressing the gendered disparities in the cultural sector and underlined the importance of promoting and protecting female artists.

A recurring message from the speakers was that the role of cultural practices and values in sustainable development must be explicitly recognised, supported, and integrated into planning and policy in a systematic and comprehensive way. This means that culture must be integrated in health, education, peace and security, governance and human rights, and economic development policies and processes. Arts and cultures were recognised as key resources to address contemporary challenges and as reliable strategies to find appropriate solutions to issues that concern citizens.

Overall, the 37th GIMAC meeting highlighted that a peaceful, prosperous Africa is one that supports women and girls. Participants reiterated that achievements of Agenda 2063 should focus on creating conditions where women, girls and youth can thrive, while tapping into their cultural heritage.

4.13 Coordination

Under the leadership of FAS as Coordinator of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) African women's network, the organisation played a key role in facilitating the 37th GIMAC. Notably, FAS worked closely with Rozaril Memorial Trust, the GIMAC Thematic lead for 2021 with support from The CARROT Co with program development and implementation. Further, FAS provided both financial and technical assistance to various activities including fundraising, engaging experts, panellists, participants, interpreters, and the technical team in ensuring that the 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultative meeting was a success.



Annex 1

The following recommendations emerged from the 37th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultations:

Human Rights

- Implement in full the Maputo Protocol to promote cultural autonomy: The AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States should fully implement the Maputo Protocol to bring women and girls' voices in the creative sector.
- Address human rights violations against artists: The AU, RECs and Member States must address human rights violations against artists, including addressing the gendered inequality in the arts and culture sector. Governments must address the challenges that women artists face in a male-dominated cultural environment, including GBV, harassment, unequal opportunities, unequal remuneration and poor working conditions.
- Utilize arts and culture for human rights promotion: The AU, RECs, Member States, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the private sector should utilise culture and arts as tools to support human rights promotion. Arts and culture should also be used as tools to prevent and address human rights violations, gender-based violence, and to confront inimical social practices such as early and forced child marriage (EFCM) and female genital mutilation (FGM).
- Involve traditional and cultural leaders as gender champions: The AU, RECs and African Governments should revitalize African culture and heritage by involving traditional leaders as champions of women and girls' rights.
- Ensure inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in AU and GIMAC Meetings: The AU, RECs and Member States should provide sign language interpretation for meetings, in line with inclusion and the "leave no one behind" principle.

Peace and Security:

- **Incorporate arts and culture into mainstream peacebuilding:** The AU, RECs, Member States, CSOs and stakeholders working on peacebuilding should integrate arts into traditional peacebuilding. This requires gaining a better understanding about what the different forms of arts (visual, performing, and literary art forms in various cultural contexts) can offer to peacebuilding processes and landscapes.
- **Facilitate an enabling environment for women and girls to utilize arts and culture for peace building:** The AU, (RECs) and Member States create an enabling environment for women and youth to play more decision-making roles in peacebuilding and reconciliation, using arts and culture as tools for the broader peacebuilding and reconciliation agenda.
- **Recognise the role of arts and culture in the quest for peace:** The AU, RECs, Member States need to accelerate action towards integrating arts into peacebuilding in Africa with full recognition of African heritage. This includes using the arts to tell and interpret people's stories, heal trauma, repair broken relationships between communities.
- **Engage traditional and cultural leaders in conflict settings:** This can provide unique opportunities to reduce the risk of violence erupting or can mitigate conflicts that have already emerged already. Peacebuilding processes that are based on shared values and norms are more likely to promote social cohesion.
- **Provide platforms for women and youth to express themselves with art towards peace:** Governments and CSOs should provide spaces for women, youth and other marginalized groups to express heritage and explore alternatives to violence.
- **Support women artists engaging in positive public art:** The AU, RECs, Member States should support the role of women in positive art, to help construct a new shared narrative that tells people that peace is possible and that individuals can play a part in achieving and sustaining peace.
- **Use art to understand and address gendered roots of conflict and vulnerability:** CSOs and peacebuilders can use arts and culture as media to understand gendered sources of vulnerability, which are drivers of violent conflict. Arts can also be used to promote resilience and strengthen gender-responsive approaches to violent conflict. The efforts to promote gender inclusion in peacebuilding should be locally led and contextually adapted.

Governance

- **Establish gender responsive and inclusive governance systems for the arts and cultural space:** The AU, RECs, member states, RECs. UN agencies and CSOs should ensure that there are proper gender equality policies in the arts and culture space. This includes establishing transparent cultural governance systems with appropriate policies and mechanisms to support female artists.
- **Utilize arts and culture to promote women and youth participation in governance:** Culture can be used as a strategy to promote women and youth empowerment and to strengthen the recognition that their participation as co-leaders in political process and decision-making is essential.

Education

- **Mainstream arts and culture into the educational curricula** and facilitate their reward and compensation, ensuring that females occupy the value chain of the creative industry including being producers, decision-makers and directors.
- **Utilize arts and culture to promote girls' education:** The AU and its Member States should use arts and culture to eliminate stereotypes and harmful social norms hindering the promotion of inclusive education. Arts and culture, alongside traditional and cultural leaders can be used as vehicles to encourage girls' education
- **Provide basic literacy on cultural heritage in educational processes:** There must be a commitment to quality education and training in arts and culture. There is need for basic literacy for everyone and professional literacy in arts and culture, to contribute to sustainable development.
- **Document narratives of African women and undertake research on women in creative spaces:** African Governments, in collaboration with research institutions, academic centres and think tanks should support more research on women in the cultural and creative sectors. This includes identifying the gender gaps, causes and drivers for those gaps, and exploring initiatives that can be taken to remedy those gender gaps;

- **Build and support a pipeline of gender-aware creative personnel:** This includes training content developers, creators, producers and actors in gender mainstreaming and awareness, while ensuring that they are supported to advance their roles in the creative industry.
- **Undertake capacity building efforts and support professional female artists** by reaching out to schools and supporting women and girls to explore arts and the creative industry.
- **Harmonise the implementation of the Continental Strategy for Education (CESA):** Ensure that culture and heritage are mainstreamed and evaluated in the CESA implementation. Invest in arts and culture education, based on well-articulated policies, accompanied by the necessary resources and with reasonable timelines.

Economic Empowerment:

- **Implement the Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries in Africa:** AU Member states should implement this Plan of Action to promote the safeguarding, organisation, production, marketing, distribution, exhibition, and preservation of African cultural and creative industries as well as the teaching of the arts.
- **Engage traditional and cultural leaders in awareness-raising on the importance of girls education:** The AU, RECs, Member States, CSOs and the private sector should leverage on culture and heritage to support girls' education. This includes conducting dialogues on gender mainstreaming with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and local communities to support girls education.
- **Provide funding and resources towards the creative industry:** Allocate the necessary resources and implement the relevant policies and programmes towards establishing a more robust and sustainable creative industries sector. This includes providing support for production and distribution and ensuring access to microcredit for the arts industry, as well as promoting cultural entrepreneurship.
- **Position arts, culture, and heritage in post-pandemic recovery efforts:** African governments should strategically position arts and culture as vehicles for economic development, notably in promoting the revival of tourism in a post-COVID-19 era. Given the travel restrictions, there is opportunity for utilizing the local creative and arts industry including domestic tourism, as a key for promoting recovery.

- **Promote women's economic empowerment in the creative sector:** The AU, RECs and Member States should adopt a sector-wide approach for promotion women'sto promote socio-economic empowerment of women, inculcating the spirit of Pan-Africanism, tapping Africa's rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa's economic growth and transformation.
- **Institute social protection measures for artists:** To accelerate post-pandemic recovery processes, the AU, RECs, and African governments should institutioninstitute social protection measures for the creative sector, including protecting their socio-economic rights. This includes addressing the gendered impact of the CovidCOVID-19 pandemic on the creative industry, including focusing on and supporting women whose livelihoods have been eroded by the pandemic.

Health:

- **Integrate arts, culture into health promotion:** In addition to utilizing arts and culture as strategies to promote health and provide support to local health systems, including supporting womenwomen's engagement in promoting community health.
- **Traditional medicine should be integrated into the African health strategies.** African governments should adopt a hybrid approach to health by integrating traditional and biomedical health systems, ensuring expansion and outcomes of community health care, while amplifying the trust relationship between traditional healers and modern health workers.
- **Scale up the capacity of traditional healers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:** The AU, RECs and Member States should promote the role of traditional healers, including birth attendants and midwives and caregivers during the CovidCOVID-19 pandemic. This should be accompanied by the provision of the necessary equipment, protective gear, and the use of communication campaigns to raise awareness.
- **Support research on African health therapies and their role in health promotion:** The AU, through the Africa Centre for Disease Control (A-CDC), should support research and development of African therapies for fighting against the CovidCOVID-19 pandemic, and other public health challenges.

Organisers & Partners

We would like to thank the following institutions and organisations for their expertise, generous support, sponsorship and fruitful cooperation; which made 37th GIMAC Pre Summit such a successful event, and without whom we would not have been able to realise our goals. We are looking forward to continuing these partnerships on our way towards GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA.

§ 37th GIMAC Pre Summit Meeting participants

§ Action Aid International

§ AUC Bureau of Chairperson, , Ms Ouriatou Danfakha

§ AUC Commissioner. Amira Elfadil Mohammed, Health, Humanitarian Affairs

§ AUC Commissioner. Josefa Sacko Agriculture & Rural Development

§ AUC Women, Gender and Development Directorate, Ms. Victoria Maloka, Acting Director Women, and Dr. Tapiwa Uchizi Nyasulu Rweyemamu

§ AUC Commissioner Prof Sarah Agbor from Cameroon, Social Development, and Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

§ AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E. Bineta Diop

§ AUC Youth Special Envoy – Ms Aya Chebbi

§ GIMAC Steering Committee Members, GIMAC Young Women's Network and members represented by:

- African Artists Peace Initiative (AAPI)
- African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
- African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)
- Africa Leadership Forum (ALF)
- African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
- Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA)
- Association des femmes de l' Ouest (AFAO-WAWA)
- Egyptian Business Women Association (EBWA/BPW Egypt)
- Femmes Africa Solidaritee (FAS)
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)
- Institute for Social Transformation (ISF)
- Ipas Africa Alliance (Ipas)
- The CARROT Co.
- The Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC)
- Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO)
- Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT)
- Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)
- Young Women's Christian Association Cameroon (YWCA)

§ International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

§ MSD For Mothers (MSD4M)

§ Oxfam International Pan Africa Program

§ Plan International

§ Regional Economic Communities (RECs) – COMESA, IGAD, SADC, ECOWAS

§ UN Women

§ United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA)