

**Africa Pre-Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-Seven (CSW67)
Common Africa Position Adopted by Ministers Responsible for Gender
and Women’s Affairs and/or their Representatives on 1st of December 2022
with participation of the African Union, the UN system, and
Representatives of Civil Society Organizations**

on the theme

“Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”

KEY MESSAGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CSW67

I. PREAMBLE

African Union (AU) Ministers responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs met in a virtual consultative meeting on 1st December 2022 in preparation for the sixty-seven (67th) session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) on the priority theme ***“Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”***. The theme aims to build consensus on strategies and actions for ensuring that African women and girls are at the centre of decision -making in innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age, sectors that are strategic for a transformative recovery that strengthen women and girls’ social and economic empowerment and leadership and for Africa’s resilience.

The meeting built on commitments made in the international and regional normative frameworks on the human rights of women and gender equality, mainly:

At International level:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (UDHR), 1948
- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, (CPRW), 1954
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2006
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), 1995
- The Programme for Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (PAICPD), 1994

- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (SDGs), 2015
- Resolution 73/284 on the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)
- Marrakech Declaration on Sustainable Development held from 16 to 18 April 2019

At Regional level:

- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), 2003
- The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), 2004
- The Africa Union Agenda, 2063
- The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2018-2028
- The AU Digital Transformation Strategy, 2020-2030
- The AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, 2014
- African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms (2014)
- Resolution 522 of the African Commission of Human and People's Rights, on the protection Women Against Digital Violence in Africa, 2022
- The African Union Science and, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024)¹
- The Dakar Declaration on Education for all and ICT, 2022

1. **Guided** by the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063, particularly aspiration 1, *A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, with well-educated citizens and skills revolutions **underpinned by science, technology, and innovation*** call for the developing of Africa's human and social capital. This process can be carried out through education and skills revolution emphasizing science and technology.
2. **Cognisant** of the AU commitments on promoting and implementing gender-inclusive frameworks, policies, laws, leadership, and skills development for women and girls, as stated in the Africa Strategy for digital transformation, *“To harness digital technologies and innovation to transform African societies and economies to promote Africa's integration, generate inclusive economic growth, stimulate job creation, break the digital divide,*

¹ African Union (2014). [On the Wings of Innovation: Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024](#).

and eradicate poverty for the continent's socio-economic development and ensure Africa's ownership of modern tools of digital management"².

- 3. Reiterating** our concern that “*Women in Africa remain the majority of the poor, the dispossessed, the landless, the unemployed, those working in the informal sector, and those shouldering the burden of care*” as expressed in the African Union (AU) Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028.
- 4. Recalling** the resolution made by the African Commission of Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) during its 72nd Ordinary Session held from 19 July to 2 August 2022, which notes with concern that women are constantly at risk of violence online and that most women who access the internet have been subjected to some form of harassment, while a number of States continue to have gaps in their legal frameworks to protect women against digital violence.
- 5. Reiterating** the existence and need to track the SDGs related to technological innovation and access to and use of the digital economy, mainly;
 - SDG 1 and 8, where women have access to skills, information, and decent work in creating technologies, thus increasing their income levels towards reduction of poverty.
 - SDG 3, where the use of ICT is embedded in policy to build innovations that promote good sexual and reproductive health.
 - SDG 4, where women are centred in digital training policies.
 - SDG 5 where access to and use of digital devices, internet, and content is increased for women.
 - SDG 7, where digital access is accelerated using clean energy sources.
 - SDG 9, where data and user needs drive investment in industry, infrastructure and technology, and innovations in finance, agriculture, and good health.
 - SDG 10, where technology is used to increase access for women with disabilities, and those who speak local languages.
 - SDG 16, where women lead ICT strategies.
- 6. Recalling** the *Declaration of the Principles of Freedom of Expression and Access to information in Africa*, which stress the responsibility of all Member States to take positive steps to ensure that women and girls can

² African Union (2018). African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028)

enjoy their rights to freedom of expression and access to information by imposing sanctions for the harmful sharing of personal information.

7. **Noting** recommendations from the 2020 African Regional Science, Technology, and Innovation (ARSTI) forum for the SDGs, underlining gender equality in STI, as a human right and as a vehicle for Member States to benefit exponentially from a diverse workforce³.
8. **Further noting** the Agreed Conclusions of the 55th CSW (2011) on access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.
9. **Aware** that available, measurable, sex disaggregated data and gender statistics supports the ability to build targeted technological innovations, track diseases, facilitate equitable ownership of resources including land, counter disinformation, keep governments, private sector, CSOs accountable, and act as an educational resource
10. **Express concerns** by the dearth of sex disaggregated data which reduces the use of data to build innovations that aim to reduce gender inequality making it difficult to formulate policy proposals, to monitor progress towards closing the gender gap, reduce transparency of processes.
11. **Further concerned** by the crisis of girls' education in some African countries with the largest number of out-of-school girls⁴, a crisis that was further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting however that for those who attended school, data shows equal levels of completion of primary school by both boys and girls⁵.
12. **Aware** on the other hand that although Africa contributes to the highest number of female graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), education globally which is equivalent to 47%⁶ of the students who graduate at tertiary level in STEM, major disparities still exist among sub regions.

³ ECA. (2020). [2020-2030: A Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063](#).

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2019). [New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School](#).

⁵ Armstrong, M. (2022). [Education: Girls are catching up with boys in sub-Saharan Africa](#).

⁶ Times Higher Education. (2022). [The Gender Equality Report – Part 1](#)

- 13. Encouraged** by successful national initiatives taken by Member States to address the gaps and challenges to enable women's and girls' education and employment, inclusion and participation in innovation and technological change and education,
- 14. Having considered** the challenges still faced by many African countries in technological access and use, despite the numerous progresses made in technological innovation and change, and in education for achieving gender equality and ensure the inclusion of women and girls in the use and creation of technology.
- 15. Recognising** that all Governments have the responsibility of developing national policies and priorities in accordance with international and regional obligations and commitments to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and that the UN entities and partners are called to assist governments, upon request, in accordance with national laws and taking into account priorities, realities and capacities.
- 16. Aware** that the current situations already marked by a regression of the gains made to advance human rights of women and gender equality due to the effects and consequences of the COVID pandemic. This situation will worsen further as the scale, speed, and velocity of the fourth industrial revolution pose a risk of widening those already existing gender gaps, if women and girls do not acquire the skills needed to thrive in this revolution. This gap will exclude them from future labour markets or economic gains, and they will also be left behind as the jobs of the future emerge and take shape.

II. KEY MESSAGES:

- a) Women participation and empowerment are understood as being multidimensional and intersecting. Considering global and regional commitments made by member states in the various frameworks on Gender equality and Women's empowerment, it is of utmost importance to close the gender gap in technology and innovation. Indeed, if digital transformation is to benefit everybody, it must include women in the full cycle of innovation - from creation, to legislation, and utilization;

- b) To address the digital divide, efforts by Member States and all stakeholders need to consider the social, political, and economic factors that drive the design, development, and use of digital technologies, and put women and girls at the centre of technological change, innovation and education;
- c) Land data digitalization systems support in generating gender statistical data as well as enable easy access to land information and promote land transaction transparency;
- d) Secured land rights for women set off powerful, continued ripple effects that go a long way toward realizing gender equality and a range of critical SDGs and human rights. Stronger women's rights to land and productive assets are linked to enhanced status, improved living conditions, better nutrition and food sovereignty, improved health and education outcomes, higher earning and individual savings, and better access to credit, as well as better protection from gender based violence;
- e) The benefits of women and girls inclusion in Africa's technological transformation constitutes the foundation of AU's 2020-2030 Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, committed to promote gender-inclusive frameworks, policies, opportunities, and digital skills development for women and girls;
- f) These frameworks must consider;
 - i. **Rights** - protect human rights of everybody by challenging gender norms that bar inclusion in digital and innovation change and ensure consumer data protection;
 - ii. **Education/training** - use education and training to equip women and girls with skills they need to access, use, create, and work with technologies and innovations;
 - iii. **Access** - deliver affordable and easy access to sustainable technologies, innovations, information, services, resources and regularly updated related laws;
 - iv. **Content** - support the creation, availability, and use of contextualized content, including free information on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, legal rights, climate change, and financial services;
 - v. **Targets** - Include gender as one of the evaluation criteria for digital projects. Set and measure concrete gender-equity targets and make data publicly available for use by stakeholders according to the national laws and procedures;

- g) Gaps in policies and processes must, therefore, be addressed and policies, strategies, laws, regulations and procedures developed, to ensure that African women and girls are at the centre of change in technological innovation, and of the process of transforming Africa's development;
- h) Safe and secure participation of women and girls in digital economy is smart economics and will potentially accelerate digital inclusion;
- i) **Considering** the context described above and in response to the calls made in the AU Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) and in the UN Secretary General's report on the Roadmap to Digital Cooperation, we agree to set our priorities in the following areas:

1. To Build an inclusive digital economy and society through the following actions

- a. Implementing existing pathways for economic development, job creation, access to services by ensuring that women and girls, have their business digitally enabled to strengthen their contribution to the African economy and sustainably investing in women and girls' innovators in start-up, non-profit and academic ecosystems driving change across a variety of technology innovation fields;
- b. Enforce policy and legal measures to address the socio cultural and educational issues, including poor infrastructure, that contribute to the exclusion of women and girls from accessing and using technological tools and facilitate and promote their access to digital devices and services;
- c. Conducting on-the-ground assessment to understand women and girls' connectivity, ownership needs, using and providing data to inform connectivity plans, developing and implementing initiatives that equip women and girls with digital devices and services;
- d. Investing in development of open-source tools and operationalisation of land information systems to generate disaggregated gender statistics in a bid to promote women tenure security in line with the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa⁷;
- e. Creating employment opportunities where women and girls can be creators and builders of technologies that provide information in all

⁷ https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33005-doc-draft_report_to_au_stc_progress_in_implementing_the_au_declaration_on_land_issues_and_challenges_in_africa_2017_revised_with_guideline.pdf

sectors including finance, agriculture, data driven land governance and administration that secures women and girls land rights and sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights;

- f. Harness the power of community driven data by women and girls in line with SDG principle of Leave no one behind (LNOB) and as an opportunity to build the gender disaggregated ecosystem to track progress and improve programming;
- g. Investing in building technologies to support the day-to-day lives of women and girls with disabilities and providing fintech services to meet the needs of all women and girls, especially those who lack mobility;
- h. Give women the opportunity and build their capacity to lead organizations or institutions in ICT and innovation companies;
- i. Embedding the use of ICT in policies that promote good health and wellbeing and using clean energy to increase access to digital tools for women and girls;
- j. Supporting women and girls in the use of technology in mitigation, adaptation, prevention, and responding to climate change among other emergency issues.

2. **To engender the Development of human and institutional capacity in innovation, technological change, and education through the following measures**

- a. Taking and enforcing gender responsive legal, policy and programmatic measures to address the attrition of women through the education-to-labour-force pipeline resulting in their minimal presence in the labour workforce in ICT as they face poor recruitment and gender biased and discrimination in the labour market in some countries;
- b. Addressing the issue of women and girls access to finance and funding by Governments, Private sector, Development partners, Philanthropists, Social Enterprises and NGOs;
- c. Prioritizing strategic and systematic investment in the development of digital infrastructures, services, skills, and entrepreneurship, to enhance the digital literacy among women and girls, for example through reform of the education system;
- d. The development of broader and inclusive ICT infrastructure required to enable innovative use of ICT for socioeconomic purposes such as e-health, e/m-banking, e/m-commerce, e/m- government, e-agriculture, and other ICT-enabling services;

- e. Prioritising digital training for women and girls and putting them at the centre of partnership agreements and policies that aim to increase access to and use of digital tools and the internet;
- f. Continuing to build infrastructure to broaden access to and use of technology by women and girls in remote rural areas, migratory routes and in refugee camps;
- g. Prioritising digital training of women and girls as a core aspect of public service policies and program;
- h. Embedding digital capacity in educational curricula; prioritising digital training of women and girls as core aspects of government policies and programmes to equip women with digital skills; promoting the use of digital technologies to start and grow businesses; run e-commerce initiatives; improve access to market and trading information services; improve employability and provide training in health, finances, entrepreneurship, and other sectors;
- i. Providing financial support to women entrepreneurs to enable them utilize ICT;
- j. Equipping communities and institutions with expertise, resources, and leadership to train women and girls on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) skills;
- k. Promote and enforce public voluntarism and work on digital literacy training targeting women and girls including persons with disability.

3. To Protect human rights of women and girls through the following measures

- a. Undertaking research on digital violence against women and girls in the private and public spaces to identify gender responsive legislative policy needs and solutions;
- b. Encouraging the progressive implementation of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol through development, adoption and implementation of relevant policies, procedures and strategies, and the issuance of legislation that enhance the human rights of women for protection in their participation in public life, in accordance with the provisions in these two frameworks and in all frameworks on gender equality and human rights of women and national legislations and procedures;
- c. Proposing the use of the following strategies and actions which are of importance to prevent and eliminate violence against women online and

in public life, as well as protecting survivors of violence against women in those spaces through the following measures;

- 1) Enhancing women and girls' knowledge of digital safety and security;
- 2) Accessing and utilizing virtual digital space to provide information on violence against women and girls, on response services including safe spaces, reporting and compliance mechanisms and support and approaches to curbing digital risks;
- 3) Develop and implement strategies and actions to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls in the digital space;
- 4) Set up structures and mobilise resources to provide psychosocial support for women and girls affected by online violence;
- 5) Build the capacity of law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, police officers and judges, to apply according to the national laws and procedures;
- 6) Make private ICT and telecom companies aware of internal regulatory system and gender policy and bring them to enforce and implement them to curb violence risk.

4. To promote digital trust, safety, security, and stability through the following measures

- a. Ensuring the availability of a regulatory environment that is safe, secure and stable and promote people's trust;
- b. Strengthening regulations, laws, policies, processes in the building and regulating of the digital ecosystems in Africa and put in place the mechanisms to ensure safe and secure online ecosystems;
- c. Ensuring that Africa governments efforts to digitalise land administration and management information promotes secure women land rights in accordance with the 2009 African Union Declaration on Land issues and Challenges.

5. To Foster intra African and global digital cooperation through the following measures

- a. Building on Africa Strategy for digital transformation and the UN Secretary General call for the international community, development partners and private sector to help ensure all people, particularly women

and girls, are connected, supported, respected, and protected in the digital age;

- b. Encouraging Member States to take concrete actions to foster intra African and global digital cooperation in line with the objectives of the African Union strategy on digital transformation;
- c. Promoting solidarity, cooperation and coordination among continental institutions pursuing the Continent's digitalisation agenda among African Union Member States; the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, African Institutions, and International organizations;
- d. Adopting an ecosystem approach that is comprehensive in defining and applying the requisite elements and foundations for digital transformation;
- e. Building partnerships with other stakeholders such as the relevant entities of the United Nations System, regional and international organisations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities;
- f. Encouraging development agencies, civil society, private sector, employers' organisations, trade unions, professional associations and the media to take appropriate actions with a view to bridge the gaps in developing human and institutional capacity to support country-level digital sustainability;
- g. Building a cooperation platform for all Member States to share knowledge and good practices.

Adopted on 1st December 2022

