

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Venue: Swakopmund, Namibia

Ministerial High-Level Seminar of the AU Peace and Security Council: Advancing Women's Participation and Leadership in Peace Processes in Africa

Recognizing the pivotal role women play in peace-making and peace-building endeavours, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) convened a landmark Ministerial High-Level Seminar themed: **“Commemorating 20 Years of the PSC by Taking Stock of Women's Participation and Leadership in Peace Processes in Africa.”** Held on Saturday, 23 March 2024, in Swakopmund, Namibia, this inaugural Ministerial High-Level Seminar on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) aimed to champion women's meaningful participation and representation across all dimensions of peace-making, notably within formal peace processes in Africa.

The High-Level Seminar was attended by the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FEMWISE) from the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), women peacebuilders, gender experts, development partners, civil society organizations, think-tanks and other relevant stakeholders.

The Seminar was inaugurated by Hon. Dr. Peya Mushelenga, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia and Chairperson of the PSC for March 2024. Dr. Mushelenga underscored the imperative of amplifying women's voices, acknowledging their experiences, and advocating for their active involvement in all phases of peace processes. He emphasized, **“By ensuring women's full and equal participation, we not only enhance the effectiveness of our peace initiatives but also pave the way for a more just and equitable society.”**

Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security outlined the Commission's efforts in advancing the WPS Agenda in Africa, acknowledging progress made and challenges to be addressed. He highlighted the pivotal role of women in promoting peace on the continent and praised initiatives such as the AU Panel of the Wise (PoW), institutionalization of the Office of the Special Envoy on WPS, establishment of FEMWISE Africa, African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), cooperation with the African First Ladies Peace Mission and the inclusion of female African Youth Ambassadors for Peace, all enhancing women's participation in peace processes in the Continent. **“We need to further strengthen the protection of women and girls by mainstreaming them in all our peace efforts,”** the Commissioner stated while addressing participants on the impact of conflicts on women.

Ambassador Parfait Onanga Anyanga, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary -General to the AU, lauded African women's tireless efforts in promoting peace and security. He urged concerted action to further enhance women's participation, stating. **“Let us commit to taking the necessary policy decisions to ensure that our African heroines continue to impact positively on peace process.”**

The Seminar welcomed the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Peace and Security Council and its commitment towards championing and promoting the women, peace and security agenda since the establishment of the Peace and Security Council.

Participants expressed concerns regarding the persistent underrepresentation of women in peace processes and the prevalence of violent conflicts on the continent. They underlined the importance of integrating gender provisions into peace agreements to address women's security in conflict and post-conflict settings. Additionally, they commended Member States with National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementing UNSCR 1325 on WPS and urged those Member States which are yet to adopt NAPs to redouble efforts in advancing the WPS Agenda.

The Seminar called for the development of a Policy Framework of Women Quotas in Formal Peace Processes across Africa. The Policy will guide the Continent to meet the statutory minimum of thirty percent (30%) gender quota for women's participation in all conflict prevention and management missions, peace processes and election observation missions led by the AU, while reaffirming its adherence to the goal of full gender parity.

The Seminar agreed to institutionalize the '**Ministerial High-Level Seminar on Women, Peace and Security in Africa**,' to be formalized as the '**Swakopmund Process**,' to be held biennially on a rotational basis, as a platform that allows the members of the PSC to engage with local, national, regional and continental actors on women peace and security matters and to recognize the contribution of the Republic of Namibia to women, peace and security issues globally.

Participants paid tribute to the late President Hage Geingob, for his advocacy for women's meaningful participation in decision-making forums. They expressed sincere condolences to the Government and People of the Republic of Namibia on the passing of President Hage Geingob and appreciated the Government and People of Namibia for hosting the historic event.

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