

The 2017 Solidarity Action: The sub region women and youth solidarity mission to The Gambia

28 to 31st March 2017

DECLARATION OF THE SOLIDARITY MISSION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN, YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL REGION,

Kairaba Beach Hotel, Banjul, The Gambia, 31st March 2017

We, Women, young men and women of the Working Group on *Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and The Sahel*, representing 13 countries, namely – Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and The Gambia, associate ourselves with the declaration of the Senegal-Gambia-Guinea Bissau Women's Forum for Peace and Security of 27th December, 2016.

Take due cognizance of the opportunity provided by this Solidarity Mission to The Republic of the Gambia from 28-31st March, 2017.

Reaffirm our solidarity and commitment to the people of The Gambia while we reiterate our support and commitment to stand especially with the women and youth of this nation;

Congratulate the Government of the Gambia for having successfully held the presidential elections in a transparent and democratic manner, and are on the verge of organizing parliamentary elections for the National Assembly;

Congratulate the Gambian security and defense forces for contributing to maintaining peace for the Gambian people at a critical time in the history of this nation;

Commend ECOWAS, AU and UN for the resolute role and successful mission in the Gambia's post presidential electoral crisis;

Appreciate the utmost necessity given to prioritize dialogue in order to reach consensus on the then electoral process;

Note that although the economic growth of West Africa is one of the highest on the continent, it continues to experience peace and security challenges;

Further Note that ECOWAS is one of the regional African institutions which has invested the most on issues related to peace and security through various peacekeeping operations in member states such as Cote D'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, as well as the elaboration of regional and international normative instruments for the resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace and security in the Region;

Commend the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) which through the establishment of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel Region since 2009 sought to accelerate the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and other related resolutions including 1820 (2008), 2242 (2015) and 2250 (2015);

Reiterate that peace is an important variable for the attainment of sustainable development, good governance, stability and social cohesion;

THEREFORE CALL ON The Government of The Gambia to remain resolute in its mission to bring change in 'The New Gambia' and to -

- **Establish** and strengthen an equitable justice system for all Gambians, irrespective of ethnic, class, gender, political or other affiliations;
- **Respect** the fundamental principles enshrined in national, international and regional legal instruments that the Gambia is a party to;
- **Support** for organizations working on peace such as the Women, Youth, Peace and Security working group, national and international non-governmental organizations and associations, as well as, the United Nations;
- **Strengthen** national democratic institutions for effective governance;
- **Ensure** peace and security of all citizens in the forthcoming legislative elections as well as the envisaged 2018 local elections;
- **Accelerate** the establishment of the Republic's arms of government and all other relevant institutions and ensure their effective functioning;
- **Ensure** that the right to participation and representation of women and youth as well as other marginalized groups are promoted and protected in the organization of free, fair and transparent elections ;
- **Urge** the President of the Republic to formulate and assent to a decree implementing the law on the quota for gender equality, especially in women's political participation and representation already provided for in the existing legislation;
- **Guarantee** that the proposed review of the Constitution of the Republic takes into account the inclusive participation of women, young people and other marginalized persons and groups;
- **Encourage and support** the capacity strengthening of women and youth leaders engaged in peace building and conflict resolution, especially CSO platforms for peace, to enable them contribute towards these processes directed at building national capabilities in this field;
- **Implement** the 2017-2020 Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework for an enhanced inclusion of women and youth in all peace and security processes during transitional and post-transition phases.

The Defense and Security Forces, to

- **Continue** to ensure the security of its people, property and borders, in accordance with the principles of their mission; and
- **Promote** and strengthen civil / military collaboration.

Civil society, to

- **Recommit to strengthen** unity, dialogue and more synergy of action among their various groups and their constituencies;
- **Advocate** for peace and reconciliation in the thematic areas of the national gender policy and women empowerment 2010-2020;
- **Promote** and actively support the participation and representation of women and youth in all spheres of national development;



- **Conduct** stakeholder dialogue on peace and security periodically among the platform and non-state actors;
- **Engage** in and support the implementation of all relevant instruments relating to the maintenance of peace, security and social cohesion in the Gambia;
- **Promote** women's competence by strengthening their capacities to integrate conflict resolution and peace building concepts in all programmes ;
- **Promote** networking and engage in building solidarity among civil society and between civil society and other stakeholders at the national and regional level.

The International Community, to

- **Accompany** and support all nation building efforts, especially those geared towards enhancing gender equality, the empowerment of women and youth to effectively contribute to national development;
- **Provide** support to strengthen the capacity of civil society peace network, especially the Gender Action Team (GAT) to enhance its engagement in the building and maintenance of peace and security at the local, national and sub-regional levels.

MOTION OF APPRECIATION

Finally, Women and young men and women members of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and The Sahel extends its appreciation to all citizens of The Republic of The Gambia for the warmth and hospitality accorded them during the Solidarity Mission, particularly H.E. Mr. Adama Barrow; Honourable Spokesperson of the Coalition for Change, Mr. Halifa Sallah; Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Henry Gomez; The Executive Director, Women’s Bureau, Mrs. Binta Jammeh Sidebeh; the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in The Gambia, Mrs. Ade Mamonyane Lekoetje; The Chief of Operations/Head of UNFPA Office in The Gambia, Mr. Kunle Adeniyi; the UN Gender Theme Group chaired by the Programme Officer Gender, UNFPA, Mrs. Fatou Kinteh; the Executive Director of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS); the Head of The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO),), Mrs. Hannah Forster and Mr. Ousman Yabo Co-chairs of The Gender Action Team (GAT) respectively; civil society and non-governmental organizations, the media and the entire Gender Action Team (GAT) membership.

*Done in Banjul, The Gambia
31st March, 2017*