



**OUTCOME DOCUMENT  
OF  
THE REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON  
"PARTICIPATION, REPRESENTATION AND PROTECTION OF WOMEN IN  
ELECTORAL PROCESSES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION"**

**Addis Ababa, 12-13 November 2019**

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1. The Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the African Union (AU) Department of Political Affairs (DPA), in partnership with the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), convened a regional workshop on the "Participation, Representation and Protection of Women in Electoral Processes in the Great Lakes Region" at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 12 to 13 November 2019.
2. The meeting was attended by senior officials from electoral management bodies (EMBs) and Executive, Legislative and Judiciary from the ICGLR Member States and signatories of the Peace Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (PSC-Framework) namely: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Kenya, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Sudan, Republic of South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Uganda, the Republic of Zambia and South Africa.
3. Also in Attendance were: representatives of the UN, AU, ICGLR, SADC, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral System (IDES), representatives of other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and religious leaders (See list of participants hereto attached).

4. The workshop sought to provide a platform to discuss the low participation of women in electoral processes and its root causes; protection of women's rights throughout the electoral cycle; preventive and capacity strengthening measures to achieve the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in electoral processes.

### **Opening session**

5. The workshop was opened by H.E Madam Minata Samate Cessouma, AU commissioner for Political Affairs. Mr. Huang Xia, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Amb. Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary, ICGLR; Ambassador Boubacar Issa Abdourhamane, representing the Secretary General of the OIF and H.E Madam Samba Panza the co-chair, Femwise Africa, Madam Hannah Tetteh, UN Special Representative to the AU.

6. The workshop addressed the following thematic areas: (i) Global frameworks and barriers to women's Representation and Participation; (ii) observation of elections within the Great Lakes Region; (iii) securing electoral processes; (iv) Gender sensitive elections; (v) women in Electoral Management Bodies; (vi) role of women in election dispute resolution.

7. The various statements highlighted the importance of the workshop in light of forthcoming elections in the Great Lakes region and stressed the need to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation

8. Speakers noted that there will be elections in three ICGLR Member States in 2020 (Burundi, CAR and Tanzania). Participants called on the Member States to guarantee the protection and participation of women in the forthcoming elections. Participants also called on the AU, UN, ICGLR and SADC to pursue joint good offices initiatives to promote an inclusive electoral process that guarantees the rights of women in these countries

### **Global Framework**

9. Following the review of global, continental and regional frameworks, participants noted that progress on women's representation in elective and appointed positions has been slow, with their share in lower houses' of parliament being 24.3 per cent on average. This situation falls short of the gender balance requirements highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As at 1 January 2019, only 6.6 per cent of Heads of State and 5.2 per cent of Heads of Government were women. Compared to the global figures, in the Great Lakes Region, the situation of women representation in parliaments is encouraging, with an average of 27 per cent.

10. Whereas some countries have adopted affirmative action, others still have less than 15 per cent representation of women in the lower chambers. While highlighting

the need for concerted efforts to address the barriers that hinder women's representation, participation, their access to equal opportunities and equal participation in electoral and other political processes; the participants noted positive trends in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

*Recommendations:*

- Encourage Member States to undertake a gender-responsive audit of electoral laws to inform legal reforms for more gender-sensitive legal frameworks.
- Undertake advocacy through the different ICGLR fora for all Member States to ratify with no reservation and expedite the implementation of the Maputo Protocol.

**Women's Representation and Participation**

11. Participants noted that women are under-represented at all levels of electoral processes, as a result of limited technical and financial capacity to contest and the security challenges associated with fragile electoral contexts.

*Recommendations*

- Encourage Member States to undertake multi-sectoral interventions to improve electoral security throughout the electoral process;
- Encourage Member States to focus more on the quality and not only the quantity of women and youth participation in all aspects of elections, including their right to stand;
- Political parties should be supported to develop and implement gender policies to tackle patriarchy, socio-economic challenges, violence against women in politics and other obstacles to free and fair elections;
- Encourage Member States to develop training programmes for security agencies on gender-sensitive electoral security with support from UN Women offices and other partners.

**Elections**

12. Participants noted a decline in voter participation due to lack of confidence in electoral processes. It was also observed that elections do not necessarily guarantee that democracy prevails. The failure of political dialogue, the search for common aims and reciprocity, and the concomitant judicialisation of electoral processes are also challenges to credible elections.

### Recommendations

- Member States and development partners to invest more in strengthening the capacity of citizen observer groups to play a monitoring role on key thematic issues include women and youth participation;
- International observation groups to review existing EO guidelines and tools to sharpen the focus on assessment of marginalised social groups (women, youth, people with disabilities etc).
- ICGLR to work with UN Women and other regional bodies to adopt the gender-responsive election observation guidelines.
- The AU and ICGLR to develop post-election follow-up methodology to ensure that EO is backed up by concrete reforms aimed at ensuring meaningful representation and participation of women in decision-making structures in Africa (balance quantity with quality);
- Political parties to institutionalize intra-party democracy, that uphold gender equality in leadership selection and nomination of candidates;
- International observer groups to advocate for electoral management bodies to collect and publish gender-disaggregated data for improved planning of elections.

### **Gender Sensitive Elections**

13. Participants noted that a decline in funding for electoral support. This particularly makes it difficult for States to provide funding for women candidates.
14. Violence against women in politics remains a challenge to the participation of women.
15. Participants noted the negative impact of negative media coverage of women candidates and election managers on their participation.

### Recommendations

- Member States to work for the establishment of a seed fund or special fund to support women candidates in the region ;
- The UN, AU and other stakeholders to jointly formulate programmes to support Member States in promoting a conducive environment for women's participation in elections;
- Member States to review legal frameworks for elections to address violence against women in politics more effectively;
- AU, ICGLR and other international partners to work with CSOs to strengthen their capacity to advocate for non-violent elections;
- Member States to work with the media regulation agencies and CSOs to sensitise the media on gender-sensitive election reporting and media monitoring.

## **Women in Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs)**

16. Participants noted that women's participation in elections especially within the EMBS is hindered by cultural factors and persistence of stereotypes on women in leadership and decision-making.

17. Participants agreed on the importance of a gender audit of election management bodies to strengthen the advocacy for improved representation of women in EMBS at policy and technical levels.

### **Recommendations**

- The AU working with the EMB networks to consider a peer review mechanism of EMBS;
- The AU, ICGLR, UN and other international partners to encourage Member States to adopt gender policies and undertake legal reforms to ensure a minimum of 30% representation in EMBS;
- Member States to undertake independent gender audit of EMBS which have been established by acts of parliament and with legal obligation;
- the AU working with the Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA) and regional EMB networks to promote networking for women in the EMBS by establishing a network of women election administrators;

## **Women in Election Dispute Resolution**

18. The lack of appropriate dispute resolution system design for electoral disputes.

### **Recommendations**

- To redesign electoral dispute systems to cater for appropriate dispute resolution grounded in good faith dialogue, common aims and reciprocity;
- To insulate elections and the judiciary from political influence.

### **Note of appreciation**

At the conclusion of the workshop, the Chair of the session and participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Ethiopia and the African Union Commission for hosting and the guarantors of the PSC-Framework for convening and facilitating this important workshop.

Done in Addis Ababa

13 November 2019