



CONCEPT NOTE

5TH GIMAC AU-RECS COORDINATION MEETING
ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE AFRICAN UNION



5th GIMAC AU-RECs Coordination Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Unions

Theme Of The Year:

The Implementation of the AfCFTA - Breaking Trade Barriers of African Women and Youth to Ensure their Inclusion

Dates:

13 - 15 July 2023

Location:

Nairobi, Kenya



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AfCFTA has the potential to increase intra-African trade by 81%, lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035, and boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035.

Introduction

The civil society meeting on 'Accelerating Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)' is a significant gathering taking place in July 2023. It marks 20 years since the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, celebrates 5 years of impactful advocacy work by the GIMAC Young Women Platform and 20-years of GIMAC Network advocacy work. The meeting seeks to align efforts and leverage achievements in advancing gender equality and women's economic

empowerment within the context of AfCFTA.

The interaction between the Maputo Protocol and the AfCFTA is characterized by their shared commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa. By aligning their objectives and strategies, these two frameworks can reinforce each other and contribute to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous continent where





Trade is a powerful engine for economic growth and development in Africa According to the World Bank.



women can fully participate and the meeting will foster collaboration, share best practices, and generate **actionable recommendations** to maximize women's participation and opportunities under AfCFTA

GIMAC Network, in partnership with African Union Commission(AUC) Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (WGYD), AUC Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, UN Women, United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Office of the High Commissioner

of Human Rights (OHCHR), Oxfam Pan-Africa Programme, Plan International, Christian Aid, Action Against Hunger and ActionAid and other stakeholders, will continue working towards making AfCFTA more gender-responsive and monitoring its implementation and impact on women in Africa. The network coordination meeting with the RECs will assess progress and share best practices in implementing AU decisions and advancing women's rights and empowerment in line with GIMAC Network's



thematic clusters reflecting the main themes addressed in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). These clusters are: Economic Empowerment, Education, Governance, Health, Human Rights, and Peace & Security and emerging issues including Climate Change,

The proposed 5th Strategic Engagement with AU, RECs, and Partners will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 13-15 July 2023. The event will bring together various stakeholders, including GIMAC Network members, AU organs and institutions, RECs, UN agencies, development partners, private sector, academia, media, and civil society actors. Deliberations will focus on promoting gender-responsive trade policies and practices in Africa, ensuring that no woman is left behind in trade

II. Background and Justification

Trade is a powerful engine for economic growth and development in Africa. According to the World Bank, AfCFTA has the potential to increase intra-African trade by 81%, lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035, and boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035.

AfCFTA can also enhance regional integration, strengthen continental solidarity, and foster peace and security. However, trade is not gender neutral. Trade affects men and women differently depending on their roles, responsibilities, resources, rights, and risks. Therefore, trade policies and practices need to be gender-responsive, meaning that they take into account the different needs, preferences, constraints, and opportunities of women and men, and aim to reduce gender inequalities and promote women's empowerment.

However, gender-responsive trade policies and practices are not yet widespread in Africa. Despite the existence of various regional and international frameworks and commitments on gender equality and trade, such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the Maputo Protocol, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is still a lack of data, analysis, awareness, capacity, and political will to mainstream gender

in trade policy formulation and implementation. Moreover, there is a lack of effective participation and representation of women and women's organizations in trade negotiations and decision-making processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the existing gender gaps and vulnerabilities in trade. The pandemic has disrupted global and regional supply chains, reduced trade flows, increased trade costs, and affected various sectors that employ a large number of women, such as tourism, textiles, garments, and agriculture. The pandemic has also increased the burden of unpaid care work on women, reduced their access to health care and education services, and exposed them to higher risks of violence and abuse. Furthermore, the pandemic has highlighted the digital divide that limits women's access to information, communication, technology, and e-commerce opportunities.

In addition, women living in conflict zones are also significantly faced with multiple challenges in the implementation of trade policies such as AfCFTA. The ongoing conflict in Sudan has had

a devastating impact on women and girls, who are among the most vulnerable demographics in times of violent upheaval everywhere in the world. Women and girls displaced by the fighting in Sudan are at risk of rape as a weapon of war or falling prey to human traffickers this is further exacerbated by cross-border trading.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for GIMAC Network to engage strategically with the AU, RECs, and other relevant partners to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are mainstreamed in the implementation of AfCFTA. This will require a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach which includes amplifying the voices of the marginalised women such as the Sudanese women, to address both the opportunities and challenges that AfCFTA presents for women in Africa. It will also require a strong advocacy and monitoring role for GIMAC Network to hold governments accountable for their commitments and obligations under various national, regional, and international instruments on gender equality and trade.



III. Objectives

The main objectives of the 5th GIMAC Strategic meeting are:

1. To increase awareness and knowledge on the gender dimensions of AfCFTA and how they affect women's human rights and the empowerment of women in Africa, and to share effective strategies and tools for accelerating gender mainstreaming in AfCFTA implementation especially in conflict zones;
2. To identify and address key issues, challenges, opportunities, best practices, and recommendations for mainstreaming gender in AfCFTA implementation at national, regional, and continental levels, and to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of gender-responsive trade policies and practices in Africa.
3. To strengthen the capacity and coordination of GIMAC members and other civil society actors to advocate for gender-responsive trade policies and practices in Africa, and to support their active participation and influence in AfCFTA implementation processes and mechanisms.
4. To enhance dialogue and partnership between GIMAC members and other stakeholders such as AU organs and institutions, RECs, UN agencies, development partners, private sector, academia, media, and other civil society actors on gender and trade issues in Africa, and to foster joint actions and initiatives for accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment in trade.

IV. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the meeting are:

1. A common understanding and consensus on the gender dimensions of AfCFTA and its implications for women's rights and empowerment in Africa, among GIMAC members, and other stakeholders, as evidenced by a joint statement or declaration adopted at the end of the event.



2. A set of concrete and actionable recommendations for mainstreaming gender in AfCFTA implementation at national, regional, and continental levels, based on evidence-based research and best practices, as documented in a report or policy brief disseminated to relevant actors within three months after the event.
3. A strengthened network and coordination mechanism among GIMAC members and other civil society actors to advocate for gender-responsive trade policies and practices in Africa, as demonstrated by a joint action plan or strategy developed and implemented within six months after the event.

A strengthened dialogue and partnership between GIMAC members and other stakeholders such as AU organs and institutions, RECs, UN agencies, development partners, private sector, academia, media, and other civil society actors on gender and trade issues in Africa, as indicated by a memorandum of understanding or cooperation agreement signed or renewed within one year after the event.

V. Proposed Topics

The proposed topics for the 5th GIMAC Strategic Engagement with AU, RECs and Partners on the AU Theme of the Year ‘Accelerating Implementation of AfCFTA are:

- **Gender mainstreaming in AfCFTA implementation:** policy frameworks, strategies, tools, indicators, and best practices at national, regional, and continental levels.
- **Gender-responsive trade facilitation:** addressing non-tariff barriers, enhancing trade infrastructure, simplifying trade regimes, promoting cross-border cooperation, and leveraging digital technologies for women traders.
- **Gender-responsive trade in goods:** enhancing women’s participation and competitiveness in value chains, promoting value addition and



Enhancing women's access to digital technologies and skills, promoting e-commerce and digital trade opportunities.



diversification, ensuring market access and preferences, and protecting women's livelihoods and rights in sectors such as agriculture, textiles, garments, handicrafts, peace and security etc.

- **Gender-responsive trade in services:** enhancing women's access to quality services such as health care, education, finance, transport, etc., ensuring quality standards and regulations, promoting market access and preferences, and protecting women's rights and interests in sectors such as health care, education, tourism, ICT, etc.
- **Gender-responsive trade in the digital economy:** enhancing women's access to digital technologies and skills, promoting e-commerce and digital trade opportunities, ensuring data protection and privacy, and addressing digital divide and gender gap in ICT sector.
- **Gender-responsive trade and sustainable development:** ensuring environmental and social sustainability of trade, in the context of conflict, promoting green economy and climate resilience, addressing trade-



related impacts of COVID-19 on women, and aligning trade with Agenda 2063 and SDGs/ Update on African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



- Gender-responsive education services:** This encompasses enhancing women’s access to quality education and ensuring women and girls rights and interests are protected within the education sector. This calls for establishment, financing and the maintenance of quality standards and regulations for educational institutions, facilitating market access and preferences for women-led educational initiatives, and promoting gender equality in educational opportunities. By focusing on gender-responsive education, we can empower women by providing them with skills and opportunities necessary to achieve equal access to quality work and trade services, enabling them to access broader economic opportunities, realize agency and contribute to society in various sectors including, healthcare, tourism, ICT, enterprise, academia, politics and beyond.
- Conflict impact on AfCFTA:** Here we will interrogate how conflict has impacted the actualization of AfCFTA in Africa using current conflict dynamics, we will listen to the voices of women from Sudan on their experiences of conflict. This will enable us to interrogate how the current peace building landscape continue to perpetuate patriarchal power that promotes militarized peace building that continue to sustain unequal power relation that keeps women away from peace processes. The presentation will articulate recommendations of what is needed to ensure Sudanese women are included in the ongoing peace talks.

VI. Proposed Structure

The proposed structure of the strategic meeting is:

- A three-day event consisting of plenary sessions, panel discussions and networking sessions,
- Celebrations aligned with Maputo @20
- A participatory and interactive approach that encourages dialogue, exchange of views, sharing of experiences, and identification of best practices and recommendations among GIMAC Network members and other stakeholders.



- A gender-balanced representation of speakers, moderators, facilitators, and participants from across Africa, various sectors, and backgrounds.



VII. Proposed Participants

The proposed participants of the meeting are:

- Representatives from GIMAC member organizations from various thematic clusters and regions.
- Representatives from AU organs and institutions such as the AU Commission (AUC), the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP),
- Representatives from RECs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), (Gender and private sector RECs representatives)
- Representatives from UN agencies such as UN Women, Office of High Commission on Human Rights
- Development Partners such as Oxfam Pan Africa Program, Plan AULO, Action Against Hunger.
- Representatives of Sudanese women;
- Research Institutions such as African Population and Health Research Center
- Private Sector such as MSD for Mothers





VIII. Important Dates



- **19 June to 04 July, 2023** - PRC, Addis Ababa
- **10 - 11 July 2023** - Maputo @20 High-Level Meeting Kenya
- **13 July 2023** - 10th Young Women Advocacy Training Kenya
- **14-15 July 2023** - #5GIMACRECSMeeting Kenya
- **13- 14 July 2023** - Executive Council Kenya
- **16 July 2023** - Assembly Kenya, UN Complex in Gigiri
- **17 - 20 July 2023** Women Deliver Conference Kigali, Rwanda

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