

United Nations  
Office to the African Union



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Bureau des Nations Unies  
auprès de l'Union Africaine

**Closing Remarks by UNOAU SRSG – Parfait on the Occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup>  
African Women's Forum on Enhancing Women's Participation and  
Leadership in Peace and Security**

**UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF H.E. SAHLE-WORK ZEWDE, THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

**14<sup>th</sup> December 2023, at the African Union Commission**

Your Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, African Union Commission Chairperson,

Your Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia and Patron of the African Women's Leadership Network (AWLN),

Your Excellency Dr. Joyce Hilda Banda, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders,

Your Excellency Catherine Samba-Panza, Former President of Central African Republic,

Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Madam Bineta Diop,

Ambassador Stian Christensen, Ambassador of Norway to Ethiopia & Permanent Representative to the African Union,

My dear colleagues, Ms. Hannah Tetteh – UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa,

Ms. Awa Ndiaye Seck, Special Representative of UN Women to the AU and UNECA, whom I warmly congratulate for her outstanding service and dedication in furtherance of women's rights, dignity, protection and empowerment, as she will soon be taking a well-deserved break in service from the U.N. (I don't want to call it retirement),

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNOAU is honored to take part in this very important forum. **As someone who claims his full "He 4 She" membership**, and as a staunch ally of the implementation of the WPS Agenda, I have the distinct privilege to witness the conclusion of this very fruitful two-day 4<sup>th</sup> African Women's Forum focusing on: Enhancing women's Participation and Leadership in Peace and Security Processes in Africa.

As we draw the curtains on this year's Forum, my team and I are filled with gratitude for the intuitive discussions and invaluable contributions made over the past two days. The

depth of engagement and the commitment demonstrated by our distinguished speakers and participants underscore the urgency and importance of the agenda we have set.

Throughout this forum, we have examined the challenges and opportunities surrounding women's participation in peace and security processes. The high-level panels, group discussions, and presentations have provided us with a rich tapestry of experiences and lessons learned. As we reflect on the insightful sessions, let us distill the key takeaways into actionable strategies.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The voices heard in this room, both in-person and virtually, resonate across the African continent and beyond. We have delved into the personal experiences of leaders, explored the resources needed to support women mediators, and scrutinized the frameworks shaping women's participation in global peace and security governance. Importantly, we have discussed the role of media in mediation, recognizing the digital spaces as both opportunities and risks.

As we move forward, let us carry the momentum generated during these discussions into our respective spheres of influence. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our esteemed moderators, speakers, and participants for their invaluable contributions. Special appreciation goes to H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, for her unwavering support and leadership.

I would like to commend H.E Dr. Joyce Hilda Banda, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders, H.E Catherine Samba-Panza Former President of Central African Republic, and of course, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Madam Bineta Diop, for her relentless efforts to galvanize the continent towards making the leadership and participation of women in peace and security process a tangible reality. Allow me also to appreciate the significant contribution of UN SG Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Madam Hanna Tetteh.

Your messages with regards to the critical use of the tools we have for enhancing the effective participation and leadership of women in peace processes is spot-on. I urge us all to be proactive in paving the way for women's inclusion in the first Tier of negotiations processes.

This is no longer an option. Science has spoken. It's a well-known fact that peace processes in which women are active participants have a 30 percent chance of lasting

longer. So, we ought to be smarter and deliberate about shifting the power differential and related obstacles that still hamper women's effective participation and leadership in peace and security initiatives. Sustaining peace efforts without a meaningful participation and leadership of women are simply elusive.

### **Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is therefore our collective responsibility to break down barriers, challenge patriarchal norms, and create an inclusive environment where women can thrive in leadership roles. Let us ensure that the strategies formulated during this forum serve as a roadmap for advancing women's inclusion in peace processes across the continent.

The UNOAU is committed to amplifying women's voices, strengthening networks, and implementing the proposed gender agenda. My office is committed to supporting the office of the AU Special Envoy- WPS, Madam Diop as well as other relevant offices at the AUC, particularly CPAPS, our main partner.

Our support in capacity building for FemWise, the African Women's Leadership Network, CSOs and in the electoral processes and equal participation and leadership of women is at the core of our work.

Documenting and amplifying women's voices based on their own experiences is a joint initiative that began and continue to evolve, including by:

- (i) Using the tools available to the UN, such as Good offices, UN Secretary-General António Guterres is paving the way to amplify the voices of women and seeking accountability for Conflict related Sexual Violence;
- (ii) Jointly reporting to the UN SC;
- (iii) Promoting "She Stands for Peace- Book". This book has key messages by African Women leading and participating in Peace and Security efforts. It amplifies the voices of women, and this has been demonstrated by the fact that some of the women featured have taken strategic positions in peace and security efforts; and
- (iv) She Stands for Peace- Podcasts series. This is a resource that informs the issues at the core of the UNSCR 1325, and it is useful – not only to build expertise but to also for advocacy in accelerating the implementation of the WPS agenda.

(v) We have also begun work on the Gender and Security Sector Reform work.

We thank our partners, the Government of the Kingdom of Norway, The Government of Ireland for their vital support, which is enabling us to make significant strides in the implementation of this key agenda. We are indeed grateful for their engagement, commitment, and dedication to the cause of women's participation and leadership in peace and security in Africa.

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

In closing, let us not only celebrate the progress made during this Forum but also recognize the work that lies ahead. The outcome document encapsulates our collective commitment to advancing women's roles in peace and security. Together, let us carry this commitment forward, turning words into actions, and fostering a transformative change that will resonate across the continent and positively impact our resolve to silence the guns in Africa once and for all.

I thank you all for your dedication, passion, and determination. Let us continue the journey towards breaking barriers and building lasting peace by amplifying women's voices in Africa.

Thank you and goodbye.