

CALL TO ACTION

Youth Regional Consultations on Beijing+25: 12-14 August 2019, Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire and 27th October 2019, Addis Ababa Ethiopia

We, the 250 African young people, mostly adolescent girls and young women, in all our diversity, from across African countries representing all regions gathered on 12-14 August, 2019 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and on 27 October, 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the youth regional consultation on Beijing +25 on the theme "Generation Equality Africa".

We recognise, respect and value the work of those who shaped our present with their past efforts, resulting in the empowerment of young African women and girls and in the advancement of their rights.

We know as African young women and adolescent girls, we do not live single issue lives. The emerging and critical issues facing adolescent girls and young women in Africa reinforce the need for interlinked and interconnected solutions that address structural and systemic inequalities.

For the Africa regional Beijing+25 outcome to have an effective and transformative impact for young women and girls in all diversities, the evolving nature of capitalism, neoliberal, neocolonial and extractivist model of development continue to undermine young women and girls' rights must be recognized as drivers of inequalities.

We urge that the African regional Beijing+25 outcome uphold the principles that recognize the diverse needs of young women and girls without discrimination of any kind, particularly on the basis of HIV status, geographical location, disability, sexual orientation gender identity and expression. The platform must recognize young women and girls are not just beneficiaries but also active citizens and leaders in their communities.

The emerging and persistent issues affecting young women, adolescent girls and non binary persons in all their diversity include : i) Religious, traditional and social cultural norms that continue to perpetuate stigma and discrimination, (ii) Persistent and new forms of violence against young women, adolescent girls and non binary persons in all their diversity mostly sex workers, women human rights defenders, women of sexual minorities displaced, migrant and refugee women and girls, indigenous and women in rural and conflict areas, fuelled by radicalisation, conservatism, militarisation, extractivism, technology (iii) Structural drivers of migration, displacement and human trafficking that perpetuate inequalities and injustices (iv) climate crisis that threatens survival of ecosystems as well as extractivist model of development (v) Unfulfilled need for comprehensive sexuality education that addresses physical, mental and social well-being. (vi) Continued denial of young women, adolescent girls and non binary persons' right to universal health coverage including mental health, bodily autonomy and integrity, access to information, services especially safe and legal abortion.

CALL TO ACTION

We call for all African member states to:

1. Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work

- Establish effective mechanisms to hold multinational and national corporate sectors accountable to principles of transparency, human rights, and ecological justice

2. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

- Remove the barriers to completion, retention and transition for women and girls including pregnant girls, young mothers and differently abled women and to provide comprehensive education inclusive of Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET), Science Technology Engineering and Mathematic (STEM) and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) within and beyond schools, grounded in human rights, gender equality, and bodily integrity, evidence based, accessible to all, responsive to children's and adolescent's evolving capacities, and enable greater autonomy over decision making and lives
- Guarantee access to available, acceptable, quality, youth-friendly and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services that include contraceptives and safe and legal abortion without discrimination, especially towards women living with HIV, women with disabilities, sex workers, domestic work, and migrant women, in order to reduce rates of maternal mortality.
- Regulate and/or reverse privatization of social protection systems to ensure public services remain a public good and refuse trade and investment agreements that restrict states from delivering social protection for all.

3. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

- Address all forms of violence against young women, adolescent girls and non binary persons by improving access to justice and comprehensive services through a multisectoral approach that includes psychosocial and economic support for survivors and adopt a sustained human rights and justice approach that addresses structural and systemic causes of all forms of violations.
- Protect women human rights defenders by creating a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights and prevention of violations and abuses inter alia, threats, harassment and violence.

4. Participation, accountability and gender responsive institutions

- Domesticate, ratify, localise, implement and be held accountable of gender responsive laws and policies in relation to young women and girls in line with national, regional and global commitments.
- Remove and repeal laws that criminalize women and girls on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and that erase bodily autonomy and integrity.
- Facilitate and prioritise the inclusion, meaningful engagement, participation and leadership of young women and girls in decision making and political spaces. This includes providing financial support, guaranteeing their safety and promoting gender transformative policies and practices within political parties.

- Guarantee and allocate public financing and resources for social protection systems and public social infrastructure, including sexual and reproductive services. Allocate gender responsive and progressive budgets for gender equality, health, and education programs.

5. Peaceful and inclusive societies

- Implement national action plans developed in line with Resolution 1325 and other instruments relating to peace and security, that protects the rights of adolescent girls and young women in conflict and humanitarian settings and ensure their effective and meaningful participation and decision making in matters relating to peace and security

6. Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

- Mitigate and reverse the adverse impact of the extractivist, neoliberal development model on ecosystems and local communities, particularly on indigenous and rural-based women and girls.
- Regulate and hold accountable multinational and national corporations in collusion with state actors that are engaged in large scale agriculture, mining, mega projects, and commercial logging in order to uphold human rights principles, eliminate labor exploitation of women and girls, land and resource grabbing.

We call on African member states and partners to ensure that Beijing+25 outcome is not business as usual and it that adopts an ambitious and transformative approach that truly centers young women and girls in all their diversity. As African young women and girls, we commit to play our role and call on the Beijing+25 youth taskforce to take forward the issues and voices in this call to action at all levels.