**YOUTH PRE-SUMMIT MEETING ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE**

Outcome Statement

**Preamble**

This statement is the result of a pre-summit meeting organized by the African Union Commission and partners on the margins of the first ever African Girls Summit.

1. We, the daughters and son of Africa, united by the bond of an African identity, are concerned with the future of Africa and the challenges girl children face, with special emphasis on harmful traditional practices such as child and forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation;
2. Cognizant of the various international and continental policy and legal frameworks that promote the empowerment, development and general wellbeing of the girl child from a rights based perspective and
3. Acknowledging that the future of Africa lies in her people, especially children and the youth who are not a liability to the continent but should be harnessed as a demographic dividend;
4. Reaffirm our solidarity with the millions of girls who have been harmed and whose lives have been affected by these harmful practices and required and rely on your commitment to eradicate these practices within a generation;
5. Have devised these recommendations moving forward

**Recommendations**

**To all Nations of the African Continent**

We urge you to:

1. Adopt and domesticate the various international and continental legal frameworks on Child Marriage and call on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Somalia, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan and Tunisia who are yet to ratify the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to urgently do so;
2. Harmonize the legal definition of the age of marriage (minimum age of 18) across all national policy documents and this should always take precedence over customary law;
3. Establish and enforce national policies and strategies to prevent and respond adequately to harmful social practices (HTPs) such as Child and Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); the aim is to end child and forced marriage within a generation;
4. Prosecute perpetrators of Child and Forced Marriage and enforce penal laws so they protect the physical and psychological integrity, dignity and right of the girl child;
5. Create a comprehensive support system for the survivors of child marriage;
6. Strengthen existing health systems to provide youth and child friendly as well as gender sensitive Sexual and Reproductive Health Services that meet the needs and demands of children and young people (particularly girl children affected by child Marriage);
7. Provide age appropriate, extensive and inclusive sexuality education for all. This should involve curriculum development and the standardization of training manuals which target teachers, political, civic and religious leaders, children, as well as young people in and out of schools and communities at large;
8. Utilize a collaborative approach in engaging Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders in the development and humanitarian sectors to monitor the status of sexual and gender based violence, Child and Force Marriage in Africa;

**To the Civil Society Organizations and other stake holders in the development and humanitarian sectors**

1. Enhance advocacy programs and strategies for the domestication and implementation of international and continental frameworks to end Child and Force Marriage in Africa;
2. Build and strengthen multi-sectoral approaches to prevent, respond to and address issues of Child and Forced Marriage ;
3. Ensure beneficiaries contribution to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs addressing HTP such as Child and Force Marriage and FGM in Africa.

**To the Media**

1. Utilize and tailor communication strategies to target the different segments of society to ensure maximum reach in advocacy efforts on child rights;
2. Ensure that media personnel are sufficiently trained in the reporting of issues around Child and Force Marriage and FGM (It is the role of the media to be sensitive in their reporting and highlight the negative impacts of HTPs);

**To the daughters and sons of Africa**

1. Sensitize traditional and religious leaders on Child Rights and engage them as child ambassadors who will own and advocate for the implementation of laws and policies on the rights of the girls child;
2. Empower young men and boys as agents of change through programs that aim to end Child and Forced Marriage and FGM, promote gender equality and equity and address issues around girls’ rights;
3. Take a firm stand and act decisively to stop Child and Force Marriage and FGM in your families, communities and across the African continent.

#BeAChildHero