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**Statement
of
The African Union Commission
at
The 55th Session of the UN Commission on
Status of Women**

by

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of the CSW**

**New York
USA.**

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H. E. Chairperson of the 55th Session of the CSW

H. E. Madame Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director and Under Secretary General of United Nations

Honourable Ministers

Excellencies Ambassadors

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of H.E. the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, I have the honour to make a statement at the 55th Session of Commission on Status of Women whose theme is ***“Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work.”***

Let me also join earlier speakers by congratulating the Chairperson and members of the Bureau for their elections and the efficient way in which they are conducting this meeting. The AU Commission also wishes to align itself to statements made on behalf of G77 and AU Member States.

On the outset, let me renew congratulations of H. E. the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to Dr. Michelle Bachelet for her appointment as the new UN Women Executive Director and Under Secretary General of United Nations. H.E the Chairperson had the opportunity to meet the Executive Director in Addis Ababa at the January 2011 Heads of States Summit and was able to convey the his best wishes and that of the entire Commission to Madam Bachelet

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

The synergy demonstrated by the African Women's Decade themes and the priorities chosen by UN Women provides a natural entry point for UN Women to engage the African continent. When Madam Bachelet attended the January 2011 Summit, she had the opportunity to discuss the nexus between the UN Women's priorities and the Decade's themes with the AU Commission and stakeholders attending the Summit including the Civil Society community. The Commission pledged to work with her office and support UN Women's efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in an unprecedented manner, aimed at transforming African Women's daily reality in general and that of rural women in particular.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

Following Ms Bachelet's 100 days vision and UN women's selected priorities, the Commission has carried out a quick analysis of the UN Women priorities and is pleased to note that 5 of its selected priorities constitute half (5) of the 10 themes chosen for the African Women's Decade. These priorities are: **Expanding women's voice, leadership and participation, which is in line with theme 9 of the Decade; Ending violence against women, which is in line with theme 7 of the Decade; Strengthening implementation of the women, peace and security agenda which is in line with theme 6 of the Decade; Enhancing women's economic empowerment, which is in line with theme 9 of the Decade; and Making gender equality priorities central to National, local and sectoral budgeting, which is in line with theme 8 of the Decade.** We see great synergy between the global and focus and believe that the accelerated advancement of women globally through the United Nations work will translate directly into transforming African women's lives in general and rural women in particular.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

The African Union has continued to provide leadership in championing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment through its ground breaking commitments which constitute the AU Gender Architecture and well illuminated in our past statements at the CSW. With the normative framework in place, I am pleased to say the AU has moved one step forward. It has adopted the African Women's Decade as the framework to guide implementation of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment agenda through the 10 themes encapsulated in the Nairobi Declaration, following the successful Launch of the African Women's `Decade on 15 October 2011, in Nairobi, Kenya in a colourful ceremony.

The Launch was attended by over 2,000 delegates from across the continent and the globe including African Heads of States and Government, First Ladies, Vice Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, Heads of United Nations Agencies, Parliamentarians, Government delegations, Gender experts, CSOs, Youth, Grassroots women and Male Champions for GEWE. The UN Deputy Secretary General led the UN delegation to the launch. Furthermore, the establishment of the Fund for African Women, alongside of the Launching of the Decade is a clear demonstration that the Assembly of AU Heads of State and Government have already provided a vehicle for mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Decade activities.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to inform you that the African Women's Decade Launch coincided with the International Rural Women's Day, in line with the theme of the Decade which was "**Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**". The Launch was preceded by important forums including NGO Forum, Experts' and Ministers of Women Affairs and Gender meetings and Caucuses based on the 10 Themes of the Decade.

The aim of the African Women's Decade is to advance gender equality by accelerating the implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), through dual top down and bottom up approaches which are inclusive of grassroots participation. The objective of the Decade is to re-invigorate commitments to accelerated implementation of agreed global and regional commitments of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

I invite delegations to visit the African Women's decade Website at www.africanwomendecade.org for important documents where each of the 10 Decade Themes are elaborated.

Theme No 3 of the AWD namely 'Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV/AIDS' was chosen by AU Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs as the theme for 2011. This decision builds on the momentum generated by the AU Heads of State and Government's July 2010 Kampala Summit theme. In this regard, the Commission has been able to organize a parallel event on this theme and also a similar Roundtable on the theme of the July 2011 Summit, namely *"Accelerating Youth empowerment for sustainable development"*; a theme that is closely related to the theme of this Session of the 55th CSW. We thank delegates for attending these side events. The outcome of Theme 3 Round Table is to identify 53-106 grassroots initiatives (2 per country) that the Union was support in 2011.

Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen

In the High Level Roundtables held last week, the Commission was able to share its experiences, lessons learnt and good practices on the CSW theme. Highlighting the Mwalimu Nyerere Initiative which has been instrumental in advancing intellectualism, encourage science and technology and inspire young generations of Africans, the Commission cited the African Union Scientific Awards which awards scientist at three levels, namely National (US

\$ 5,000), Regional (US \$ 20,000) and Continental level (US \$ 100,000). As you can see, work is already happening on the continent on this theme. With Theme 4 of the African Women's Decade focusing on Education, Science and Technology, more focus will be directed to the grassroots to benefit rural women and girls.

Once again, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, may I pledge our support to UN Women and assure Madam Executive Director of the Commissions support and best wishes

I thank you for your kind attention.