RECOMMENDATIONS

FIFTH AU-EU SUMMIT DECLARATION

29-30 November

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Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children’s rights and equality for girls. We support children’s rights from birth until they reach adulthood and contribute to creating opportunities for youth to continue in education or training and to find decent work. We believe in the power and potential of every child. But their potential is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination, with girls being by far the most affected.

In the context of the upcoming AU-EU Summit in Abidjan, Plan International would like to share our reflections on the draft Declaration released by the AU and put forward some recommendations to strengthen the final outcome document from the Summit later this month.

First and foremost, while we recognise that the focus is on youth, we noticed that children are almost completely overlooked in the draft Declaration. Since investing in children is key for investments in youth to be most productive, we would urge the EU to rectify this omission and consider introducing both political and financial commitments to this end (including in the “joint priority projects”).

Secondly, the draft Declaration is largely gender neutral, in the sense that women are mentioned and considered in a number of issues, but no gender transformative approaches are proposed which would address the fundamental social norms and discrimination underpinning gender inequality in Africa. We therefore make recommendations in this regard in the following sections.

Lastly, insufficient attention is given to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is critical for achieving the necessary transformations in the social, economic and environmental dimensions. This is the case whether one considers the specific goal areas or the principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda, such as “leaving no one behind”. That principle should be mainstreamed throughout the final Declaration as a key objective of all AU-EU commitments and joint projects, with a special focus on girls and women.

Below we set out our recommendations on various sections of the draft Declaration.

1. INVESTING IN PEOPLE

- **Gender Inequality** – given the proportion of girls and women in African populations and the numerous examples of gender inequality in all domains (social, economic, political and environmental), far greater emphasis is needed on specific measures to redress the imbalance of power between men and women and boys and girls. These range from addressing discriminatory social norms (which underpin much of the inequality) and harmful practices (such as child marriage), to tackling poverty and access to social services (such as through redistributive tax policies), to access to resources and ensuring equality of opportunity and of outcome.

- **Education** – receiving a good quality education underpins the likelihood of children – and later youth – fulfilling their potential. However, over 49 million girls are out of primary and secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa and despite enrolment having improved over the years, considerable challenges remain for children – and especially girls – to complete a full course of secondary education. Girls, in particular, drop out of education both at the transition stage between primary and secondary education and as they approach adolescence. Since two of the key reasons for this in Africa are child marriage and early pregnancies, the EU and AU must support specific legislative, awareness raising, monitoring and child protection measures to ensure that these phenomena are dealt with.

  African governments should commit to undertake gender-reviews of education sector plans and introduce gender-responsive budgeting within the sector, to ensure that education serves to empower girls. Simply reviewing curricula, while essential, does not go far enough.

  State education systems must be strengthened, for example by training and hiring more female teachers at all levels of education, but particularly secondary, and supporting women to take on management and leadership positions at schools.

  The EU and AU should commit to increase public financing of education on the African continent. This will require that by 2030, governments of low and middle-income countries boost spending on education to the equivalent of about 6% of GDP, while the EU should commit to dedicating a significant proportion of its next external affairs budget to human development, with a focus on healthcare and education (at least equal to the 20% benchmark of the current DCI and EDF). EU Member States should commit to establishing a legally binding timetable in order to reach the global target of spending 0.7% of Gross National Income as ODA.
And lastly, in line with our recommendations below on reforming governance structures and mechanisms, the AU should commit to ensuring that girls and young women are part of national decision-making and policy development on education.

• **Training and Skills Development** – we welcome the emphasis on skills development in the draft Declaration, but would urge both the AU and the EU to focus on more on soft skills development. Based on our programmatic experience, we recommend that young women are most particularly supported to gain the soft skills needed to help them enter, remain and grow in the private sector. Our private sector partners emphasise that they are able to provide many of the job-specific skills, but problem-solving, analytical and client management skills, assertiveness and confidence, and an understanding of gender equality, are vitally needed among all young people, but with a particular effort being required to reach young women.

We urge the EU to support leadership training as a key part of the soft skills development, since girls and young women are generally unaccustomed to making their opinions heard.

• **Digital Technology** – we welcome the attention paid to ICT and the digital revolution, but re-emphasise that the advances in digital technology have both advantages and potential dangers. Clearly, exciting opportunities have opened up, especially for young people, whether in the field of e-services, education, decent work or political engagement, and new technologies also have the potential to serve as a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive development. However, they also bring considerable concerns, especially regarding gender-based inequalities in access to and the use of such technologies, the potential for online abuse and harassment, and data privacy concerns. The significant gender divide already limits the ability of girls and women to benefit from many innovations of the digital economy, such as digital payments and mobile money. If gender-based discrimination is not addressed, these divides will simply grow wider.

For girls and boys to thrive in workplaces of the future, sophisticated information and communication technology (ICT) skills will be a necessity. The AU and EU should therefore encourage governments to include ICT education in their national curricula, and actively support girls’ participation in these courses. They should also work together to facilitate girls’ access to initiatives such as SMART Africa, #eSkills4Girls and Africa Code Week, so that girls and young women have an equal opportunity to participate in the digital economy.

Digital technology should be promoted in areas such as establishing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems, in education and skills development, healthcare, governance mechanisms, banking and finance and the EU should support the efforts of African countries to this end.

Lastly, in order for Africa to benefit fully from the potential of the fourth industrial revolution, the EU and AU must redouble their efforts to ensure that internet connectivity is accessible to everyone, everywhere, through joint projects including AfricaConnect2 and the African International Exchange System (AXIS), and the NEPAD Agency’s e-Africa Programme. The EU should ensure that initiatives taken in the context of the European External Investment Plan focus on reaching the furthest behind and creating locally owned MSMEs, while respecting the principles for digital development.

• **Migration** – since migration is a natural human phenomenon, the focus of the EU and AU should be three-fold. Firstly, the EU should create more safe and legal routes for international migration, with a special focus on assisting and protecting those people fleeing conflict, crisis and/or extreme human rights violations. Secondly, both the EU and AU should support the establishment or strengthening of child protection mechanisms in every country on migratory routes so that no child goes missing, is exploited or abused, with a special focus on the needs of girls and the risks of sexual exploitation, trafficking and child labour. Thirdly, it is crucial that measures targeting migrants and forcibly displaced populations taken by either party promote and protect the human rights of all children, and are specifically tailored to address their age- and gender-related needs.

### 2. RESILIENCE, PEACE, SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

• **Resilience** – a rights-based approach to resilience would be transformative and empowering, rather than simply palliative. This concept must therefore be understood to mean that strengthening people’s resilience would assist people to realise their rights by providing preventive and supportive measures and options. Crises – whether man-made (eg. conflict) or related to the impacts of natural hazards – most especially impact girls and women, so measures are needed to enhance their resilience and ensure that all efforts to ‘build back better’ not only take their perspective into consideration but aim to close inequality gaps and to realise their rights.
The EU and AU should commit to **supporting access to formal and non-formal education**, even in times of crisis and encourage governments to invest in safe and secure spaces for children’s education. Furthermore, a commitment must be made that **children and young people will be involved in all relevant processes** (not just peace-building) since their participation increases their awareness (and that of their friends, family and acquaintances), enables decisions to be taken in their best interest and thereby reduces the harm they may come to while simultaneously increasing their resilience.

- **Peace and Security** – all activities and initiatives must be developed and undertaken in full compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law. For example, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism strategies must at all times make every effort to ensure the protection of civilians and, in particular, the protection of all children, including those who may be currently or formerly associated with armed forces or groups.

The final AU-EU Summit Declaration should urgently address **sexual and gender-based violence** perpetrated against women and girls in conflict contexts, as mandated by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1888. Furthermore, efforts should be made to address the kidnapping and trafficking of women and girls within transnational organised crime and terrorism, which is often used as a funding source.

When promoting the capacity and meaningful participation of youth and women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, reference should be made to the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security. This includes women’s and girls’ active involvement in resilience plans, humanitarian response efforts, peace negotiations, and transitional justice and peacebuilding processes and mechanisms. Commitments must be made to address the specific age- and gender-based obstacles that young women may face in engaging in such processes, including entrenched gender norms and discrimination, insecurity affecting mobility and gender-related domestic labour and care responsibilities.

- **Governance** should be addressed at all levels from local to global. At the local and national levels, the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms by all countries to **enable all young people to participate in decision-making** which concerns them is key to good governance, transparency and accountability. Since girls and women in many African countries generally do not – or are unable to - raise their voices in public debates owing to engrained, disadvantageous power relations, structures and processes need to be put in place which are not only age-, but also gender-appropriate in order to ensure their meaningful participation. For example, ‘**access to information**’ approaches can amplify and aggregate the voice of young women and help them to develop as leaders. One such example is the considerable work done using community scorecards to monitor access to and the quality of social services. Such a successful methodology could be scaled up and used more widely as one of the joint AU-EU projects. **Establishing quotas** of females in different fora (eg. Parliaments, Boards of Directors etc.) is another approach that has considerable merit, not least in focusing attention on the need to empower and enable women for such roles.

At the global level, the AU and EU should support the **call for global tax reforms**. This is key for African countries to be able to raise sufficient domestic resources to dedicate to strengthening the social contract between the state and its people. Currently, global tax rules are set by the OECD and favour richer nations. There is a growing call for a **democratic, inter-governmental body** that is fully resourced and empowered to set and enforce global tax rules. The EU should, in its turn, commit to taking urgent action to **end secrecy jurisdictions**, to obliging all European companies with €40 million or more in turnover to produce public country-by-country or project-by-project reporting, and to supporting the establishment of a global wealth tax or a financial transactions tax whose proceeds would contribute to sustainable development.