



The AU-EU Partnership we want

Our Recommendations to make the AU-EU Partnership truly transformative for young people

Excellencies,

In advance of the 6th African Union (AU) - European Union (EU) Summit on 17-18 February 2022, [Plan International](#), [Nala Feminist Collective](#), [Afresist](#) and the [Gender is my Agenda Campaign Young Women Network](#) would like to outline **our recommendations on how to ensure young people, and especially young women, are not left behind and that their voices are taken into account by AU and EU leaders during and after the Summit**. We are youth-led initiatives representing broad constituencies of young women with lived experiences of the issues we are raising. We came together on the occasion of Africa-Europe week and co-organized a session exploring intergenerational co-leadership. The discussions and recommendations from the session are included in this letter, alongside other recommendations for the AU-EU Partnership.

We welcome the Joint Communiqué from the Ministerial Meeting in Kigali 25-26 October 2021. As aligned with our activism and advocacy, the Communiqué highlights the role of youth as drivers for sustainable and inclusive development and it emphasizes the importance of their active participation, social and economic empowerment and adequate and inclusive political participation. However, it fails to recognise the importance of a gender transformative approach. Therefore, we remind you that, during the Summit, all discussions must apply a gender lens and an intersectional approach. This is the only way that we can address harmful social norms and power imbalances affecting women and girls' possibility to thrive in this Partnership. **We have no more time for gender-blind discussions.**

Excellencies, the 6th AU-EU summit is an important occasion to bring forward the partnership between the two continents. Accordingly, Plan International together with the youth-led African networks NalaFEM, Afresist and GIMAC Young Women Network, have identified the following as priority areas:

1. Education and Skills Development;
2. Youth Economic Justice and Freedom;
3. Girls' and Young Women's Political Participation for Intergenerational Co-Leadership;
4. Climate Justice and Food Security;
5. Silencing the Guns for Resilience, Peace and Security;
6. Migration, Mobility and Free Movement of Persons.

1. Education and Skills Development

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- Increase national **budget allocations to strengthen public education systems** and accelerate the development of e-learning systems to deliver quality, inclusive, equitable and free, pre-primary,



primary, secondary and tertiary education especially for young women and girls offline in remote areas;

- Prioritize funding for **programmes that address the barriers to girls' and young women's education** including poverty, school fees, transport, distance and safety to school, early and forced marriage, early and unintended pregnancy, lack of sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities, gender bias and stereotypes in curricula, learning materials and teaching processes, gender-based bullying, abuse and violence in schools, colleges and universities;
- Guarantee **universal and equal access to and completion of vocational, secondary and higher education** in order to effectively address the existing young women's unequal access to employment, equal pay and working conditions compared to young men;
- **Empower young women from marginalized communities**, conflict and humanitarian settings, with equal chances to join top universities through offering targeted scholarships especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to encourage innovation so that science can work and provide fast solutions to our challenges;
- Ensure **COVID-19 Education Response Plans are intersectional, gender and age responsive** and reflect the lived realities of girls, young women, children with disabilities and other marginalized groups throughout the life cycle of education. This includes strong gender, age and inclusion analysis based on gender- and age-disaggregated data, to help shed light on gender inequalities and adapt strategies and approaches to tackle these accordingly.

2. Youth Economic Justice and Freedom

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- Commit to **equality in employment, jobs with dignity**, paid work, paid internships, compensated volunteering and equal remuneration for hourly wage of part-time and full-time work, under equal conditions;
- Interrogate the **barriers to women's participation** and recognize the **burden of unpaid work**. It is essential that girls and young women have their **skills recognised** and access to paid work opportunities across all sectors, especially considering the pre-existing burden of unpaid care work and the unequal distribution of domestic work;
- Enforce the rights and dignity for girls and young women in **vulnerable sectors** such care work, cleaning work, the service and hospitality industry, and emotional and domestic labour;
- Acknowledge the **contribution of young women in its entirety**, within the workplace and within policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, based on their skills, expertise and knowledge and not based on their gender, age or marital status;
- Guarantee the right for young women to **paid maternity leave** without discrimination, sanctions or termination of employment;
- Ensure young people – and especially young women – have easy **access to information and training**, as well as ease registration and access to financial assets to become entrepreneurs and grow their businesses if they wish.



“Why do we have to try twice as hard to prove we’re good enough? Paying young women less implies we are ‘worth less’. We are competent and capable by virtue of our hard work, merit, emotional intelligence and female leadership.” **Africa Young Women Beijing+25 Manifesto**

3. Girls’ and Young Women’s Political Participation for Intergenerational Co-Leadership

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- **Transform and adapt decision-making processes** to enable girls and young women from all backgrounds, and especially from rural and hard-to-reach communities, to interact with policy making structures in their countries and regional blocks. To create a favorable environment for gender equality, we need to involve more young women in all aspects of political processes;
- **Institutionalize intergenerational co-leadership** for young women’s full and effective political participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all decision-making levels in the political, social, cultural, economic and public dimensions of life, while strengthening young women’s voices and creating spaces and resources for their agendas;
- **Appoint young women technocrats and Special Advisors/Envoys** and other positions across industry, institutions and at every level of national, regional and global governance;
- Establish **sustainable intergenerational dialogue platforms** to strengthen inclusive networks of young and senior women for intergenerational learning, sharing, mentoring, solidarity and empowerment;
- Create **laws and regulations to protect politically vocal or active women**, young women and girls such as from online harassment. Herein, **online safe spaces** can facilitate bridging the gender digital divide. Special attention must be paid to accessibility of differently abled people;
- Build capacity to **hold governments accountable** to their commitments to gender equality, and capacity for girls and young women to access and participate in decision-making spaces;
- **Rethink intergovernmental financial support** for formal and informal women-led initiatives, and resource young women’s activism, both financially and non-financially;
- Rethink **community and grassroots engagement spaces** (such as Nhang’a practice adopted by GIMAC) to break hierarchies and provide inclusive forums for young women to share their experiences and recommendations to the decision-makers.



“As young people we must come to the table and use our voices, share our experiences, connect with our peers, learn from one another and be willing to learn from those who came before us.” **Ruvarashe Miti - Youth Vibes AfriKa**



“I don’t believe in older generations passing the baton to the younger ones, because that implies that us young people are the leaders of tomorrow, and not of today. That is why intergenerational co-leadership is so important.” **Farirai Gumbonzvanda - Girls and Goals Zimbabwe**



4. Climate Justice and Food Security

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- **Mitigate the climate change impacts** faced by girls and young women, especially those that affect their **access to and attendance in schools**. Governments should build more schools, adapt school calendars to accommodate for altered seasons and establish satellite schools, as well as integrate climate change in the school curriculum. Climate change has a devastating impact on girls' and young women and is **one of the most significant intergenerational equity issues of our time**;
- Acknowledge that girls and women are **disproportionately affected during conflict, humanitarian emergencies and food security crises**. Food insecurity also results in heightened protection risks for girls, including sexual violence and exploitation and child, early and forced marriage. We ask the support of member states to establish measures to cushion women and girls from the adverse impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on food security through social protection measures;
- Improve **healthcare for food and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases** and address a rising burden of diet-related chronic disease in a situation of persistent food insecurity and undernutrition;
- Promote the **sharing experiences and lessons** to promote replication and scaling up of initiatives, motivate wide recognition, production and investment in local and traditional African crops to promote diverse and sustainable food systems;
- Collaborate with international partners to provide financial and other resources to **support countries** that do not have the resources to adequately respond to climate change and pandemic-induced food and nutrition insecurity.



“When we look at SDG 2, we predict hunger and malnutrition will end by 2030. As we can see, we are far away from achieving our target. We cannot downplay the role of young people in building this economy and achieving this goal. Young people are the majority of the population, who have the skills, the creativity, the energy. However, they need empowerment and financial and technical support to achieve and participate in development.” **Karen Ondwasi - GIMAC Young Women Network**

5. Silencing the Guns for Resilience, Peace and Security

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- Take into consideration the **living realities of people**, especially children and young people, including girls and young women, living in a fragile context and promote ways of soliciting their views into any response;
- Support the **resilience of adolescent girls** as a specific group. As they are in the transition between childhood and adulthood, they have very specific needs. Yet they also play a significant role in the everyday survival of their communities. Therefore – in addition to addressing their vulnerabilities – acknowledge and support their resilience. This will provide a path out of many ongoing peace and security crises;



- Ensure **alternative sources of income for young women** in conflict, post-conflict and fragile settings;
- Fund and deliver **age and gender sensitive longer-term programming** that addresses harmful practices and seeks to positively shape gender equality in humanitarian settings;
- Set targets for humanitarian and development funding in regards to the inclusion of **adolescent girls in all humanitarian programming**;
- Ensure that **international humanitarian standards** continue to be upheld by all actors involved to ensure quality and accountability are not sacrificed, as humanitarian responses are rapidly scaled up and adapted. Particularly, the Core Humanitarian Standard, the Sphere Standard and sector standards including the Child Protection Minimum Standards and INEE Minimum Standards must be upheld;
- Protect the rights of girls and young women and **ensure accountability** during armed conflicts, occupation of territories, natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies;
- Protect the rights of girls and young women to **peaceful protest, assembly and freedom of speech**, both in Africa and Europe, as well as enforcement of policies and mechanisms to investigate police violence, gender-based violence and other human rights violations during the pandemic and beyond;
- Institutionalize girls' and young women's participation in **peacebuilding efforts and processes**, mediation and negotiations with documentation of their contribution;
- Contribute to an enabling environment for women's and girls' participation and empowerment in conflict and post-conflict environments, so they can meaningfully participate in conflict **prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, protection, relief and recovery**;
- Allocate funds and provide support for young women peacebuilders and young women programmes working at the intersection of the Youth-Peace-Security and Women-Peace-Security agendas.

6. Migration, Mobility and Free Movement of Persons

We ask AU and EU leaders to:

- Implement **tailored responses**, which recognize and meet varied and specific needs of children, girls' and young people. Crisis affected populations, particularly refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people and people on the move are at higher risk and vulnerability. The majority of such population are children and girls;
- Recognize that girls and women experience particular forms of gender-based discrimination, persecution, violence and abuse. **Gender-sensitive services and facilities** for girls and women, such as sex-separated hygiene facilities, and age, gender and culturally appropriate health and medical services in reception and detention centres, must therefore be provided;
- Provide **safe, inclusive and quality education**, including learning opportunities for youth aged 19-24, provide children and young people with a sense of normality amid chaos, and improve psychosocial wellbeing. Migrant and refugee children's right to education must therefore be upheld as an urgent priority;



- Ensure the **implementation of existing agreements, treaties and protocols** relating to mobility and free movement of persons on the continental level and within the AU-EU frameworks particularly the Migration, Mobility and Employment Partnership launched during the 2nd Africa-Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2007.

About the signatories:

[Nala Feminist Collective](#) is a Pan-African group of 17 feminists, with a mission to **foster, enable** and **mobilize** young women from Africa and the Diaspora, while bridging the gap between policy and implementation, intergovernmental and grassroots as well as generational spaces.

[Afresist](#) is a millennial-led ecosystem working throughout Africa since 2019, to develop innovative leadership models, train the next generation of peacebuilders and promote public policies based on the principle of Pan-Africanism.

[GIMAC Young Women Network \(GYWN\)](#) is a young people's network of over 55 civil society organisations formed in 2018 from the mother network Gender is My Agenda Campaign Network (GIMAC). GIMAC was established during the transformation of OAU to ensure women are part of, and benefit from, the transformation process.

[Plan International](#): the [She Leads Programme](#) is a joint programme of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children - ECPAT the Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), and Terre des Hommes the Netherlands (TdH) in strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Equal Measures 2030 is a technical partner. The She Leads consortium brings together child rights organisations, feminist/women's rights organisations, and girls and young women (GYW)-led groups and aims to increase sustained influence of GYW on decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions.