International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage

“Strengthening the bridge between Africa and the world to accelerate zero tolerance to FGM and Child Marriage”

Ouagadougou, 24 - 26 of April 2014

FINAL DECLARATION-

We, members of National Committees and Affiliates of the Inter African Committee, Activists, Members of Civil Society, Members of Parliaments, Representatives of Governments and International Organizations from:

Angola, Benin, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Djibouti, Ethiopia, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, The Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, having participated in the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage “Strengthening the bridge between Africa and the World to accelerate zero tolerance towards FGM and Child Marriage” organized in Ouagadougou on 24-26 April 2014 by the Inter-African Committee (IAC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), under the High Patronage of the First Lady of Burkina Faso, Her Excellency Mme Chantal Compaoré, with the support of the Minister of Social Action and National Solidarity of Burkina Faso and the financial support of the Italian Development Cooperation, as well as UNICEF, UNFPA and the Islamic Development Bank;

Recalling the numerous initiatives and measures undertaken in Africa, the continent most affected by these harmful practices, and the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa which urges, in Article 5, the African States to “prohibit[…] through legislative measures backed by sanctions, of all forms of female genital mutilation, scarification, medicalisation and para-medicalisation of female genital mutilation and all other practices in order to eradicate them” and affirms in Article 6, “that women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. They shall enact appropriate national legislative measures to guarantee that: no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties; the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years […] ; [and that] every marriage shall be recorded in writing and registered in accordance with national laws, in order to be legally recognized”;

Considering the historical adoption on 20 December 2012 by the 67th ordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution 67/146 “Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations”, as a fundamental milestone towards the achievement of zero tolerance worldwide;

Reaffirming that female genital mutilation and child marriage are serious violations of human rights which millions of women and girls worldwide have been or are at risk of being subjected to;

Congratulating the Inter-African Committee for its 30th anniversary and its constant dedication aimed at banning female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage and other harmful practices in Africa and worldwide;
Thanking the Government of Burkina Faso for having hosted this important meeting and for its commitment in the fight against these practices;

Congratulating and thanking Madam Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso and Goodwill Ambassador of the IAC, for her leadership and commitment towards protecting and promoting the rights of girls and women;

Thanking the financial and technical partners, as well as all those of goodwill in Africa and worldwide for their multiform support;

Congratulating the organizers for their excellent work;

Commit to actively pursue the fight for the complete elimination of female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage in our respective countries and wherever these practices exist, and to reinforce cohesion among all actors for the achievement of our common goals.

Recommend to States, International Organizations, especially the United Nations and the African Union, and technical and financial partners, to:

1. Ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of Resolution A/RES/67/146, especially:
   a. develop and reinforce legislation, ensuring the promulgation and enforcement of laws at the national level banning these forms of violence, including criminal sanctions for authors and accomplices, prevention measures and support for victims, in conformity with the provisions of the Resolution;
   b. promote cooperation among governments, parliaments and civil society through the exchange of experiences and good practices to harmonize national legislations and policies at the regional and international level, in order to prevent and fight the trans-border phenomenon;
   c. ensure that legislative obligations are respected at the international, regional and national levels, to guarantee the full enjoyment of girls’ and women’s fundamental rights and to put an end to impunity with suitable and effective accountability mechanisms;
   d. collect, analyse and spread, through universities, medical centres, associations committed to the fight and national organizations of women, reliable data on female genital mutilation, especially on prevalence and on existing tools and strategies of prevention so as to evaluate their efficacy, in order to ensure the elaboration and development of evidence-based elimination programs;
   e. reinforce the capacity of the regional and national institutions that watch over the application of measures banning female genital mutilation.

2. Develop strategies and actions to put an end to forced and child marriage at the international, regional, and national level, especially:
   a. raise to 18 years the minimum age of marriage, in accordance with provisions of regional and international conventions;
   b. ensure that religious, traditional and civil marriage be accorded the same juridical status so as to protect the rights of married women;
   c. envisage that all legislation reflect that child marriage is a flagrant abuse of the human rights of children.
d. develop and apply strategies that have been effective in the fight against female genital mutilation to forced and child marriage.

3. Mobilize sufficient resources and engage key actors for the elimination of female genital mutilation and child marriage, especially:

   a. advocate with governments, international organizations and the private sector to increase financial assistance, in order to support at the national, regional and international levels the fight against these human rights violations;

   b. include female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage in all relevant human rights monitoring mechanisms and set up the necessary tools in accordance with the provisions of these mechanisms;

   c. support the implementation of legislation by providing the resources necessary to ensure access to justice and for outreach to and training of law-enforcement officers, prosecutors, magistrates, healthcare professionals, teachers, media representatives and other stakeholder groups;

   d. develop innovative initiatives for outreach about national legislation and the worldwide ban on female genital mutilation and more generally about women and girls’ rights with a view towards the empowerment;

   e. ensure the inclusion of modules on female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage in university and school curricula;

   f. fully involve traditional and modern media in the fight against female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage to promote media’s sense of responsibility to cover these issues of their own initiative on a permanent basis;

   g. increase the involvement of boys and men as active stakeholders towards zero tolerance of female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage;

   h. encourage politicians, community and religious leaders and managers at all levels to be fully involved in the fight to change behaviours and attitudes, in view of the total elimination of these violations of the human rights of women and girls.