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Panel 2

Report of the Panel on Gender Equality and Human Development

The "Gender Equality and Human Development" panel convened under the presidency of Madam KATE KAINJA, Malawi's Minister of Family and the Protection of Children who stressed, in her introductory speech, on the necessity to strengthen gender instruments, mechanisms and strategies.

During their interventions, participants, among them were several ministers, presented their respective experiences in the field of gender equality and the promotion of women's rights.

Within a global context, the CEDAW, MDGs, and the Beijing Platform constitute the framework of reference for gender equality policies.

Concerning the progress made, there should be mentioned:

- Awareness of the importance of the gender dimension in the stakes of human development at the level of all countries;
- Political will in accordance to national contexts;
- Adopting measures in favour of gender equality by all African countries;
- Improvement of indicators pertaining to the schooling of young girls;
- Significant advances in women's participation in the management of public affairs in some countries;
- Dynamism of the civil society noted in various countries;
- A partnership-based approach between the State and the civil society.

Concerning difficulties met, the panel noticed the following negative externality factors:

- Disparities at the level of the schooling of young girls and the persistence of school wastages, notwithstanding the national efforts made;
- Deficits in terms of women's access to resources, ownership, basic social services, and infrastructures;
- Low participation of women in the decision-making process in certain regions;
- Feminization of poverty and HIV-AIDS pandemics and the persistence of maternal and infantile mortality;
- The weight of cultural resistance which constitutes an obstacle to gender equality.

The panel also presented an occasion to display good practices that should be capitalised:

- Constitutional guarantees for basic rights and for the protection of women and girls;
- Quota system or parity in order to enhance women's participation in decision-making;
- The harmonization of the legal arsenal with international instruments;
- The issuing of specific laws bearing on violence against women and on the access of women to ownership;
- Specific mechanisms for the promotion of women's rights and equality (Counselling; creating ministries in charge of gender equality; Ombudsman for equality; observatories ...);

- Gendered poverty maps;
- Budget-gendering initiatives undertaken by some countries;
- Gender equality and equity action plans, strategies, and programs; as well as strategies and programs to fight violence against women;
- integration of the promotion of women's rights in the dynamics of human rights and the processes of democratization and the establishment of the rule of law;
- State-civil society partnership in the area of the promotion of women's rights;
- Special local funds to encourage savings among women and to promote microfinance;
- Local centres for women's capacity-building;
- National and regional documentation, research, and study centres on gender;
- Incubators for the promotion of feminine entrepreneurship;
- A charter for the promotion of women's image in the media;
- Capacity-building programs for the benefit of women infected with HIV-AIDS;
- Capacity-building actions in the area of gender.

In fact, it was observed that despite the important efforts deployed in this field by African countries, sustained and realistic provisions should be undertaken at the national, continental and international levels.

Within this context, a number of recommendations were presented:

- Mainstreaming the gender dimension in public policies;
- Speeding up and consolidating legal reforms, in conformity with international instruments in the promotion of equality;
- Generalizing the education of girls;
- Launching large-scale programs designed to eradicate illiteracy;
- Reinforcing the participation of women in the sphere of decision-making with a view to enhanced parity:
 - Promoting feminine leadership;
 - Setting up a quota system to ensure better representativeness of women in the decision-making echelons.
- Setting up and enhancing national mechanisms for the promotion of women's rights (the level of decision; mandate; resources; organization chart);
- Promoting gender-centred technical cooperation, notably in the gendering of budgets;
- Drawing up a compendium of good practices in our respective countries in order to exchange and build upon experiences and to document the process of changes made;
- Taking all the measures necessary to ensure that women have equal access to resources, notably to loans and land;
- Taking into account the socioeconomic contributions of women in national statistics (communal and domestic work as well as informal work);
- Designing a strategic framework for proximity-based South-South cooperation in gender issues;
- Setting up an entity entrusted with the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the First African Conference on Human Development on gender and equitable human development.