



**COMMUNIQUE OF THE FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS
THEME: THE GROWTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN AFRICA:
BEYOND RHETORIC**

**DATE: 11TH - 15TH OCTOBER, 2019
AT THE YAR'ADUA CENTER AND TRANSCORP HILTON ABUJA.**

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**COMMUNIQUE OF THE FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS, WITH
THEME: THE GROWTH OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN AFRICA: BEYOND
RHETORIC HELD FROM 11TH TO 15TH OCTOBER, 2019 AT THE YARADUA
CENTER AND TRANSCORP HILTON ABUJA.**

INTRODUCTION:

This is a congress organized by the FIDA Africa Regional for women and stakeholders to dialogue on the future of the growth of women and children in Africa. It has been observed that there is the dire need for the transformation in that field. This congress is apt and timely as the growth of women and children in Africa is very eminent for development. Moreso, it is time to have proper conversation about where women are coming from, where they stand

now and the best way to move forward. This theme was chosen to remedy the challenges of women and children as they constitute more than half of the population, yet the often underutilized resource.

At the end of the incisive interactions the following observations and recommendations were made:

OBSERVATIONS:

The congress noted the following observations:

- 1) Though the concepts of growth and governance are in many ways intertwined and key to prosperity, the African continent continues to lose out on the opportunity of the force of women in its development.
- 2) Growth in gender equality includes women's ability to participate equally on existing decision making platforms.
- 3) According to recent reports from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, the African continent has demonstrated commitment to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- 4) Almost all countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; more than half have ratified the African Union's Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.
- 5) Gaps in legal and social frame works compounded by weak enforcement are the key drivers in the growing impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV).
- 6) Redress for survivors and accountability by perpetrators are in abysmal figures for violations in private and public spaces.
- 7) Sustained advocacy and engagements by the Women's movement led by organizations like FIDA, WRAPA, WARDC, CIRDDOC, WACOL under various auspices, have resulted in limited but positive impacts.
- 8) Accountability for Violence Against Women and Women's dwindling results in elections, defy logic and seem unaffected by legislations at federal and state levels where available. This is despite the fact that the country is a signatory to many international and regional instruments towards the advancement of the rights of women from a human rights perspective.
- 9) Leadership has been recognized as one of the most important variables that affect the performance of any organization, institution or nation. Scholars and commentators have unanimously agreed that leadership is one of the challenges facing Africa.
- 10) Institution building and development require visionary, dynamic and capable leadership.
- 11) Youth development is important because young persons are more amenable to change.

- 12) Women are not a uniform category, they are a diverse multifaceted social category, yet they are united by their experience of socialization.
- 13) Women are defined by variables of access and opportunity such as education, income, paid employment and credit.
- 14) Women are further stratified into subcategories of elite, working class, and peasants, therefore a one size approach will not fit all.
- 15) What is required in engaging across all categories however, is the need to have an awareness of the lived reality, and the need to show mutual respect.
- 16) Trafficking in persons is a form of modern day slavery and is a grave violation of human rights. It is a worldwide form of exploitation in which men, women, and children are bought, sold, and held against their will in slave-like conditions.
- 17) That trafficking in persons has taken a new dimension, solely for organ harvesting with the complicity of some medical Doctors.

RESOLUTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The congress resolved/recommended as follows:

- 1) By way of adopting the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR), a prompt was made for women's participation in peace processes and peace building as well as for the protection of women and girls from violations during and after violent conflict.
- 2) Despite these resolutions and numerous statements and commitments at global, regional and national levels, women are still largely absent from peace processes and peace building initiatives, and today's conflicts are characterized by widespread sexual violence against women and girls.
- 3) There is the need to promote the commitments of women as it translates into demonstrated political will and delivery.
- 4) There is need for sustained popularization of the ideology that recognizes that gender equality is a fundamental human right and an integral part of regional integration, economic growth and social development.
- 5) There is the need to enhance and implement high level, cross sector/stakeholder dialogue and deep advocacy for legislative or administrative reform to repeal discriminatory provisions or address discriminatory practices at all levels.
- 6) There is the need for the promotion and dissemination of a 'how to tools' that guide the demand and supply side engagements at all stages of reforms; tools and learning mechanisms that help to transit from demand to action.
- 7) There is need for the revitalization of momentum to support the proposed class action for the interpretation of legal provisions that in letter or material allow for the exclusion or perpetration of wrong against one class of citizens or another, particularly those most vulnerable to such.
- 8) There is need to enhance collaboration as a push button for pressure, synergy and scaling

up of pressure for reforms.

9) There is the need for the provision of more education on entrepreneurship and mentorship opportunities to provide role models and guidance to women; as well as a successor generation to sustain demand and implementation of all reforms that remove barriers to women's inclusion and participation.

10) More energy should be injected to popularize the link between gender equality, growth, development and the economy.

11) It is important that every organization or nation should have a deliberate strategy of building a pipeline of leadership succession that will tackle issues of institution building and development among other issues.

12) There is the need to have help desks in universities/institutions manned by women and ensure easy access for children/students to make reports and complains.

13) There is the need to fight for the domestication of laws by the State House of Assembly, to ensure that they are put in place and implemented.

14) There is the need for women to be their own voices and identify where their problems lie.

15) The need is also there for parents to pay more attention to their children as they end up spending time and money treating the aftermath of drugs.

16) FIDA needs to promote for a workable mental health policy as this is not available in Nigeria and other countries.

17) The government at all levels, business organizations and civil society should take the challenge of building transformative leadership seriously and put in place a strategy for the development of leaders.

18) Governments, private sector and civil society should establish or support the establishment of leadership schools for the training of transformative leaders.

19) Leadership mentoring should be institutionalized in all sectors government, politics, business, academics and civil society.

20) There should be deliberate effort to promote intergenerational dialogue at all levels.

21) More emphasis should be placed on youth development because this will involve among other things the formulation and implementation of effective youth policies that will deal with the challenges facing youth, that includes but not limited to lack of access to high quality and relevant education, unemployment, chronic poverty, political disengagement and poor environmental health.

22) It is necessary to build the capacity of people for transformative leadership for gender sensitive and child-friendly policies to drive development. This can be done through deliberate strategy at all levels with special focus on women and youth.

23) To effectively mobilize women, we must 'historicize' our journey by beginning with an understanding of who we are, as women.

24) FIDA must not rest on its oars and must continue to march forward, advocating, giving a hand where it is needed, making sure that the doors that open remain open.

- 25) There is the need to immediately harmonize the Child Rights Act (CRA) and Sexual Offences Bill because it is long due for review.
- 26) Sexual based violence and discrimination has made the world unsafe and urged all hands to be on deck to aggressively fight these issues.
- 27) FIDA leaders and members who intend to make an impact should focus majorly on gray areas/topics and work towards developing and achieving same.
- 28) The culture of silence must be broken and this can be achieved if governments of African Countries, especially Nigeria will invest on data of sexual based violence and hold the different arms of government accountable.
- 29) FIDA needs to continue legal representation at local, national, regional and international levels and engage in Strategic Litigation for women's human rights e.g. *Dorothy Njemanze v Nigeria* (2017) ECOWAS
- 30) FIDA needs to solve the challenge of data by engaging more in research, documentation and knowledge-sharing.
- 31) The practice of jungle justice wherein women are subjected to degrading forms of punishment is now prominent. Perpetrators must be apprehended to put an end to same and such acts must be discouraged.
- 32) The practice of getting house helps wherein an agent is paid instead of the domestic help fuels trafficking and should be discouraged.
- 33) Human trafficking is not just a fight for the Federal Government, hence the need for State governments to deploy strategies towards tackling trafficking.
- 34) FIDA should work towards ensuring synergy in prosecution between the Police and NAPTIP.
- 35) Topics on trafficking in persons should be incorporated into curriculum of Schools at Basic and Senior Secondary School Level. In the same vain, skills acquisition programs should be implemented in schools to empower the young ones. It is crucial to engage the Private Sector, corporate organizations, embassies & foreign missions as well as the media in carrying out advocacy against trafficking in persons.
- 36) Illegal migrant camps should urgently be abolished as they have become breeding grounds for trafficking. Illegal migrants should be deported to their home countries instead of keeping them under deplorable conditions in the camp.
- 37) Empowerment of rural women across the country is crucial, as poverty triggers parents to give out their wards to traffickers. States who have not set up human trafficking task forces, should immediately do so to win the anti-trafficking war.