COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE WOMEN’S PEACE FORUM (WPF) 2023

ORGANIZED BY THE CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE (HD) AT THE WELLS CARLTON HOTEL & APARTMENTS, ABUJA FROM TUESDAY 7TH - 9TH NOVEMBER, 2023.

Preamble

We, select 60+ women from HD Women Steering Committees, civil society actors, policy-makers, government and security institutions and organizations focused on women, youth and people living with disabilities from Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Borno, Nasarawa, Kano, Sokoto, Taraba, Oyo states and Abuja F.C.T. having attended the second edition of HD’s Women’s Peace Forum, on the theme: “Strengthening Women’s Strategic Engagement in Climate-Focused Peacemaking in Nigeria” organized by HD at The Wells Carlton Hotels & Apartments, Abuja, Nigeria from the 7th to 9th of November, 2023.

Acknowledge that …

Over time, recognition and adoption of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) by member states has created global awareness and appreciation of the need to involve women and provide safe spaces to support their meaningful participation in peacemaking and policy formulation and harness the valuable contributions they bring to the table towards preventing conflicts and promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and ultimately advancing society.

Efforts towards achieving this have been effective and sustained in some countries, although progress in Nigeria is slow. Urgent attention is required to revive efforts towards women’s meaningful inclusion through deliberate, collective, systematic and sustained action.

Identify:

The security challenges in our respective regions to include, among other things….

Farmers-herders crises; cattle rustling; communal clashes; land and boundary disputes; political, chieftaincy and leadership tussles; all forms of marginalization; armed banditry; kidnapping; ethnic and religious intolerance; natural resource-based conflicts; insurgency, ideological differences; child abuse and poverty most of which have been exacerbated by climate change.

Recognize that:
The barriers restricting women’s meaningful participation in decision-making processes in our respective regions to include, among other things ....

Structural barriers (political, social and economic), which are socially constructed such as: limited access to education; poor financial resources; weak implementation of gender quotas; limited support networks and mentorship opportunities; lack of representation in decision-making bodies; the high cost of politics (cash-and-carry approach to politics); violence and discrimination against women along patriarchal norms, cultural, religious and interest-based biases and imbalanced religious orientation around women’s participation in decision-making.

Take cognizance of our conflict and climate change induced experiences to include...

Loss of loved ones (especially, spouses and children) and means of livelihood; high rate of poverty, exposure to gender-based violence (rape, battery, child abuse, all forms of sexual exploitation and molestation); vulnerability to all sorts of hazards like prostitution; internal displacement and separation from loved ones; street begging; forced labor by school age children and distortion in education patterns; food insecurity; decline in livelihood; trauma (depression, fear and mistrust); kidnapping; shouldering family responsibilities.

Observe that there are repercussions experienced as a result of the exclusion of women in decision-making processes, which include....

Poor representation and misrepresentation at decision-making quarters, lack of financial capacity to undertake political ambitions; declining welfare provisions for women and children; loss of self-confidence and a continuous decline in the overall welfare and advancement of society.

Agree that our roles in peacemaking and inclusive decision-making include...

- Advocating for inclusive dialogue with all relevant parties in situations of conflict, particularly through the establishment of a national peace infrastructure.
- Ensuring inclusive and meaningful participation of women at all levels (grassroots, state and national) in women-based organizations to bridge existing and potential gaps, while ensuring to communicate using their local languages.
- Sharing information and lessons learned from engaging in organized seminars.
- Discouraging discriminatory roles in child upbringing as both male and female children are encouraged to take up the same roles and equally aspire for opportunities without gender-based biases.
- Organizing trainings to build the capacity of women to pursue political ambitions.
- Identifying, partnering and collaborating with men (He-for-She’s), who understand the gender challenge and positively engage in the collective action advocating for women’s meaningful inclusion.
Embarking on informed consultative discussions with traditional rulers, religious leaders, political party leaders for their buy-in and support.

- Pursuing social cohesion and consensus building to enable women speak with one voice.
- Evolving methodical and innovative approaches towards promoting the advancement of women in peacemaking and decision-making.
- Advocating and pursuing opportunities towards educating women, mentoring women for strategic positions and opportunities, through women mentoring women and men mentoring women approaches.
- Hosting national discourses for women to chart the course of women in Nigeria through guided approach, which can be monitored, evaluated and sustained; and linking local and state level efforts to national opportunities.
- Encouraging women to be well versed in the tenets of their faith in order to appropriately apply these within their contexts as women.
- Encouraging women to engage in intellectual conversations based on adequate information on the roles of women in society.
- Seeking for opportunities to empower women with both information and funds to advance their pursuits as women and leaders for societal advancement.
- Advocating for a paradigm shift whereby women embrace attitudinal shift and change in mind-set towards their capabilities, potentials and quest for opportunities that promote them as resourceful contributors to peace and security and ultimately nation-building.

We therefore recommend...

- Establishing strategic partnerships between government, civil society organizations, security agencies, traditional and religious institutions, international actors, women and youth for joint action in the drive towards the meaningful inclusion of women in peacemaking and decision-making platforms.
- Advocating for increased representation and meaningful participation of women in traditional institutions.
- Establishing a comprehensive framework to pursue implementation of existing legal provisions addressing gender issues.
- Embarking on massive awareness campaigns on the joint action plan through partnership with the media and the National Orientation Agency, (NOA).
- Engaging men as allies, as men promoting women's political participation is a boost that will help to create an enabling environment that values gender equality and women's leadership in Nigeria's political sphere.
- Engaging relevant stakeholders including women in dialogue processes towards jointly addressing natural resource conflicts.
- Engaging the media to communicate policies around the impact of climate change in peacemaking including communicating the recommendations, while also harvesting the issues.
- Providing platforms for knowledge-sharing and communicating agricultural practices that can withstand the adverse effects of climate-change.
- Advocating to government to do more in the introduction and adoption of modern and sustainable herding practices amid the climate change induced challenges affecting the availability of resources, and educating herders on these practices.
- Exploring strategies towards transiting to renewable sources of energy.
- Sensitizing traditional rulers, herders and farmers on alternative approaches to herding and farming.
Providing budgetary allocations to be deliberately set aside and released for implementation of gender reforms and women empowerment.

- Establishing women’s coalitions and strengthening the capacity of the local actors and structures to thrive in the midst of conflicts.
- Encouraging increasing civic engagement.
- Declaring a state of emergency on the need to support education of women and girls to equip and position them for diverse roles in society including participating in high-level negotiations.

In line with the UNSCR1325 and the discourse from this Women’s Peace Forum, we therefore affirm and commit that:

The drive towards peace and security in any society is more sustainable when women are equal partners in the efforts targeted at conflict prevention, humanitarian and recovery efforts in forging the path for lasting peace.

Issued this day, 9th November, 2023, in Abuja, Nigeria.