

**African Women: Economic Futures Convening
September 13th-15th, 2018 - Accra, Ghana**

STATEMENT ON AFRICAN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC JUSTICE

As a group of African feminist organisations, economists, scholars and activists concerned about the economic futures of African women, we the undersigned have come together in Accra, Ghana from September 13-15, 2018 to re-envision a radically different future for African women.

We stand in solidarity determined to liberate ourselves from Africa's colonial past and its resulting systems and structures of oppression, violence, racism, and discrimination that have shackled African women to the very bottom of the global economic hierarchy.

We recognise the prevailing neo-liberal economic growth system as an extraction-based system designed to reinforce the socio-economic and political exploitation of African women's labour (paid and unpaid), commodify Africa's natural resources and ecology for profit, and exclude African women from the table of economic decision-making.

This has manifested in various forms from micro-level violence and abuses of African women's bodies, spaces and wellbeing to macro-level exploitation through persistent gender pay gaps and discrimination in the formal sector; undermining the value of the women-dominated informal sector and unpaid work; the pillaging of extractives for corporate profit; and illicit financial flows, to mention a few.

Regrettably, we see little hope in the current direction of economic policy-making in ensuring and guaranteeing the economic futures and basic rights of African women to lead healthy, self-sufficient, happy and dignified lives. We are particularly concerned about the prospects for African women, their communities and the continent at large in light of the looming ecological and human catastrophe of climate change and prevailing global geopolitical dynamics and power structures.

As economic actors and knowledge producers, African women are well-placed to not only participate in economic decision-making, but also to shape economic analyses and systems towards more equitable and sustainable economies for themselves, their communities, and the African continent.

Our deliberations have focused on the under listed themes, observations and recommendations which we believe hold the key to realising our vision for better economic futures for all African women. We invite you to join us on a feminist transformation of the economic futures for all groups of African women.

Our meeting noted and recommended the following:

On African development, and gender & race inequities in global economic governance

- a. Globalisation as a neo liberal model has failed African countries and current trends indicate increasing inequality within and between societies, regions, and countries. Violence, inequality and exclusion are predominantly experienced by women and girls as a result of globalised economic relations entrenched in unfair trade agreements, a disastrous global financial architecture and a predatory global political economy.

- b. Regional integration can only benefit the continent if it is people centred, progressive, coherent, representative, and transformative and strengthens people's economic solidarity; and this form of regionalism is the best response to a hostile global environment.
- c. Regional policies have failed to recognise the centrality of women's role and contribution as cross-sectoral economic participants, producers, innovators, workers, and enterprises.
- d. Flowing from concerted feminist advocacy, we have developed and increased state accountability and regional frameworks that begin to address the social, political, economic exclusion that are experienced by women.
- e. While we welcome increased commitment from governments and regional economic communities, transforming these commitments into implemented and substantial realities has been subverted by inadequate local resourcing, lack of political will, public and citizen participation, and externally driven priorities.

In response to the crisis of development in Africa, we recommend the following:

1. Decolonised, African centred universal education as a bedrock for rebuilding pan-Africanist, feminist thinkers, actors and citizens.
2. Resource African integration financially and intellectually; harmonise key policies, and iterate commonality of regional communities.
3. Identify and destroy structural barriers to women's economic participation by industrialising and reimagining our economies, and rethinking mechanisations, craft, and intellectual knowledge from micro to macro level.
4. Recreate regional infrastructure that is people centred and serves local economies and communities, while creating urban-rural and cross border linkages.
5. Create stronger social and political movements, institutions and citizenship that is conscientised and catalytic.

On the extraction, destruction and the reproduction of crises: shifting economic paradigms in the face of climate catastrophe:

- a. The large scale exploitation of Africa's wealth – its natural resources, such as minerals, oil, forests, water, biodiversity and fish – for the benefit of corporates and the global elite, lies at the centre of the dominant development model which remains unbroken from the colonial period.
- b. Extractivism creates crises for people, the environment and the climate including displacement of people from their land, pollution of water, air and soil, and the destruction of forests. People's existing practices of food production and consumption are destroyed undermining their food sovereignty and their control over land, seeds, labour. Social impacts

include the breakdown of communities and traditional ways of living, increased violence, rising poverty and inequality and greater ill health.

- c. The extraction, production, and transportation of raw materials and goods are significant contributors to carbon emissions which drive climate change which in turn causes floods, extended droughts, conflicts and displacements.
- d. The costs of extractivism are principally borne by women's unpaid labour as they take care of the sick and work longer hours to meet the food, water and energy needs of their families. This represents a significant burden carried by women for the profits of corporations.
- e. This economic system uses land, biodiversity, water and cheap labour to produce goods for false needs manufactured by corporates and the global elites. This results in an unsustainable system of excessive consumption.

In order to shift African economies from socially and environmentally destructive extractivism, we recommend the following:

1. Reframe economics to centralise social reproduction and subsistence and explicate its relationship to production. This challenges the growth fixation and brings the real socio-ecological costs of extraction and destruction of natural resources into national accounting systems.
2. Recognise, craft and scale alternatives for how we produce, consume and value humanity and ecosystems in ways that are nurturing and sustainable.
3. In agriculture, restore, affirm and support women's traditional roles and practices in food production, seed generation and biodiversity preservation.
4. Transform schools and universities to recognise value and support traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices of production and ways of living.
5. Support grassroots women's movement building in alliance with solidarity organisations and with other worker, environment, climate and peasant movements and networks.

On equity, justice and rights in access, control and ownership of land & natural resources, labour, finance and technology for women:

- a. African women experience limited accessibility, ownership and control of land and natural resources. Governance and policy implementation work against women's meaningful participation in economic development by creating gender and class barriers to finance and technology.
- b. Women workers face multiple forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, in particular sex workers. As largely informal workers, women are denied social protection services such as health care but also our economic activities are criminalised by the police and other law

enforcement agencies. Physical, psychological and economic forms of violence against employed and self-employed women workers is endemic, and most informal workers such as sex workers, cross border traders and vendors, domestic workers and home based workers lack access to justice to address these violations.

- c. Women's right to livelihoods is increasingly hindered by the grabbing of natural resources such as marine and forest resources by new and old transnational corporations, particularly in extractive industries such as oil.
- d. Barely any funding for adapting to the climate change catastrophe is allocated to the women's organisations working at the intersections of women's rights and climate change, even though women are at the frontline of responding to existential climate disasters.

In view of the extreme gender and racial inequalities in who accesses and benefits from our common natural resource heritage, and the impact on women's economic security, we recommend the following:

1. Prioritise women's rights to development, particularly their right to use and benefit from their natural resources through recognition of the commons and by ending commodification of natural resources such as water.
2. Collect data that is disaggregated and captures all forms of women's labour - paid and unpaid, formal and informal - from the feminist lens and properly calculate the overall value of this labour in society and the economy.
3. Promote community led advocacy that demand that national and local duty bearers and service providers allocate public resources towards promoting and defending transformative and empowering forms of women's economic participation and equitable ownership of and access to productive resources.
4. Ensure that women from different sectors shape the ways in which internal or external government resources are allocated towards women's economic empowerment.
5. Integrate and amplify work on women's economic rights and justice across our movements.

On women's rights and dignity: economic security and well-being, social protection & labour justice:

- a. The majority of African countries have inadequate legislative frameworks, regulations and policies to advance and enable women's economic empowerment. The laws do not respond to and/or support opportunities for women economic empowerment both in the informal and formal sectors.
- b. Despite the contribution of women in society, women in most African countries are not covered by any forms of social protection services such as health insurance, child care and maternity support, unemployment benefits, reproductive health services and occupational health and safety.

- c. Discrimination against women still persists in the labour sector and women are still paid less than men, undermined in career progression including promotion and skills development and face gender biased work practices.
- d. African governments have systematically ignored and/or refused to recognise unpaid care work by women. Women's reproductive roles and domestic support take significant time, but countries are reluctant to quantify this contribution.
- e. Women continue to be grossly underrepresented in economic governance instances, nationally, regionally and internationally. However, when invited, they fall prey to political tokenism, fulfilling donor requirements and/or conditions and mostly lack the opportunity to voice women's concerns.

In response to the persistent economic marginalisation of African women and the violation of their economic and social rights, we recommend the following:

1. A thorough review of legislation and policy to ensure that all women in Africa are able to fully enjoy their economic and social rights, including their right to self-determination and development.
2. Mass education and literacy campaigns for women to understand their economic rights as well as public resources for the enforcement of those rights.
3. Governments should have clear guidelines on minimum wage equality between men and women, and put in place effective regulatory mechanisms to sanction institutional and individual acts of harassment abuse and discrimination of women workers.
4. In addition to recognising and valuing women's unpaid care work, governments must put in place policies to reward and redistribute women's unequal paid and unpaid care burdens. Overall, governments must create comprehensive policy frameworks with regard to the crisis in the Africa's care economy.
5. Governments should have gender responsive and effective social protection systems and facilities that will enhance the wellbeing of the women This includes the provision of subsidized day care centres, affordable health care, social security schemes for the informal sector, and mother care rooms at employment places.
6. Governments need to create spaces for women's meaningful participation in decision making processes. This requires women's presence and contribution at the final decision-making stage. Governments also need to implement parity laws to ensure equal participation of women in decision making.

In conclusion, we acknowledge and appreciate the work of generations of under-recognised feminist activists, scholars and movements globally but particularly from the continent that have continuously raised the issue of hetero-patriarchal bias in our global and national political economies, the neglect of women's critical socio-economic contributions, the exploitation of women's labour perpetuated from oppressive gender norms. We are committed to continuing to build our movements for just and sustainable economic futures for African women in global sisterhood with women across the world fighting for social, environmental and economic rights and justice for all.

The Undersigned:

Korkor Cudjoe
Rachel Toku-Appiah
Emmanuel Kashaija
Crystal Simeoni
Lilian Liundi
Teresa Omondi
Samantha Hargreaves
Vicky Kanyoka
Philester Abdalla
Onyinyechi Okechukwu
Anita Nayar
Britt Jenkins
Sylvia Nalubega
Amaka Enemo
Pauline Vande-Pullen
Afia Asantewaa Asare-Kyei
Patricia Blankson Akakpo
Billene Seyoum
Liepollo Lebohang Pheko
Nancy Kachingwe
Jemila Abdulai
Madonna Kendona
Rose Buabeng
Rita Nketiah

This statement was developed by participants during AWDF's convening "African Women: Economic Futures" held in Accra, Ghana from September 13th-15th, 2018.