



# NEWSLETTER No. 1 OF UNFPA LIAISON OFFICE TO THE AFRICAN UNION AND ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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## UNFPA Participation during the 33<sup>rd</sup> African Union General Assembly

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 09-10 February 2020 under the theme “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”. UNFPA was among of the key partners that attended and engaged with various African Member States, Government Officials and partners. A high level delegation which comprised of the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Arab States Regional Director, Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Ethiopia Country Representative, Ms. Bettina Maas and Former UNFPA-LO Interim Chief Dr. Hala Youssef attended the event.

In his opening remarks, the newly elected Chairperson of the African Union, H.E. Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa President of the Republic of South Africa, outlined the priorities that will need to be the focus of the African Union in 2020 to bolster the progress being made in driving Africa’s growth trajectory within the framework of Agenda 2063 including the following:

On the issue of empowerment of women and girls in Africa, the African Union Chairperson emphasized the need to move beyond the clichés and general statements; and work towards achieving practical solutions such as the implementation initiatives for women’s economic empowerment and financial inclusion, such as, awarding 25% of public procurement to women owned businesses in line with Agenda 2063. He affirmed the commitment of the African Union to work with H.E. Mr. Nana Akufo Addo, President, of the Republic of Ghana and the African Union Champion on Gender and Development issues on in Africa.

Some of the significant decisions made in this year’s Summit included the recommitment of the African Union to ending all forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence against women and adolescents girls in Africa and ensuring increase in uptake of Sexual Reproductive Health Services. This was signified by the decision of the African Union to continue with the continental campaign against Female Genital



*H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa and Chairperson of the African Union for 2020 speaking during the AU Assembly 2020*

Mutilation and child marriage. Key decisions made during the 33rd Ordinary session of the African Union Assembly included: a commitment to implementation of the Report of



African Leaders on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) through political and community-level actions and the strengthening of legislative frameworks that seek to encourage community engagement and ownership of the campaign; a commitment to address Child Marriage on the continent; as well as allocation of sufficient domestic resources to drive national and local action to eliminate harmful practices.

These are indeed welcome decisions that will accelerate ongoing efforts to achieve the Demographic Dividend linked to the three zeros, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 25 and delivery of the three transformative results which are zero preventable maternal deaths, zero sexual gender based violence and harmful cultural practices and zero unmet family planning needs. The decision by the highest organ of the African Union which is the Assembly will also assist in bridging the funding gaps in implementation at member state level as one of the significant challenges in this fight for Gender Equality is funding for programs at all levels.

The African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, H.E. Mr. Mahamat, speaking on the theme of the summit noted that the persistence of terrorism threatens the collapse of some member states and must be eradicated, and that women and children remain the biggest victims of conflict.

In line with the ongoing efforts by the AU to ensure inclusion of women in Africa's development agenda, the African Union declared 2020 to 2030 as the Decade of Financial Inclusion for Women. This is a significant and welcome development, as it will go a long way in addressing very prevalent financial exclusion affecting millions of women and other marginalized populations in the continent. Financial inclusion is a key



*Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary General Speaking at the African Union Assembly 2020*

component of the gender agenda, and will ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment for the women and girls in Africa is a reality by the year 2030, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, in his address to the Assembly, spoke on the importance of including women and youth in Africa's peace initiatives. He indicated that "Peace, social cohesion and sustainable development require women's contribution and leadership. Women clearly have an essential role to play in conflict prevention and political transitions". He reiterated the necessity of engaging and empowering Africa's youth, who had clearly demonstrated their capabilities and abilities as advocates of peace through their initiatives on dialogue and addressing the root causes of conflict. In this respect he commended the 1 million by 2021 initiative of the African Union which aims reach millions of African youth with opportunities.

## *Bilateral engagements during the 2020 AU Summit*

As part of UNFPA's on-going efforts to strengthen partnerships and collaboration in support of the commitments made at the 2019 Nairobi Summit, the ICPD 25 and the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director, held several bilateral meetings.

**A meeting with Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E Mr. Thomas Kwesi Quartey**

This bilateral meeting centered on the continued high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence on the continent, and the need for robust, up-to-date and reliable data to inform enactment and enforcement of legislative frameworks

as well as strategies and program implementation. UNFPA's capabilities in collecting, analyzing and disseminating this



*Dr. Natalia Kanem, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UNFPA*



type of data was commended. H.E Mr. Quartey encouraged the continued support by UNFPA to the African Union member States to enhance data and statistical capabilities as the foundation for addressing sexual and gender based violence.

### Bilateral meeting with Commissioner of Social Affairs at the African Union , H.E Mrs.Amira El Fadil

In the meeting the two counterparts discussed various issues. Dr. Natalia Kanem reiterated the continued support and solidarity of UNFPA to the African Union's Agenda 2063 aspirations, especially aspiration 6 on women and youth. They further discussed the AU campaign against female genital mutilation, AU Saleema initiative. H.E Mrs. Amira commended UNFPA for the technical and financial support the organization had extended African Union's Social Affairs. Dr. Kanem and H.E Mrs. El Fadil discussed the synergies between the AU's Saleema Initiative and the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM and committed to knowledge sharing and integration of best practices as well as the lessons learnt from the Joint programme into the Saleema Initiative. Discussions also included UNFPA's support to the AU's Campaign against Child Marriage as well as the development of a Common Africa Position (CAP) on Population. .

### Bilateral discussion with President of Madagascar, H.E Mr. Andry Rajoelina

One of the high level meetings that took place was the engagement of UNFPA with H.E Andry Rajoelina

President Rajoelina commended Dr. Kanem and UNFPA for the impactful programming undertaken in Madagascar and requested further support in addressing the unmet need for family planning, citing the fact that the Malagasy woman has on average 5-6 children. He indicated that this resulted in high malnutrition rates, further linked to school dropouts. Consequently, Madagascar has formulated a National Plan addressing malnutrition that seeks to reduce malnutrition by 50%.



*H.E. President Andry Rajoelina of Madagascar and Dr. Natalia Kanem, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UNFPA*

President Rajoelina pledged strengthened partnership with UNFPA so as to address maternal and child mortality, unmet need for family planning, the demographic dividend, women's economic empowerment, education and skills development. He thanked UNFPA for naming H.E Mrs. Mialy Rajoelina a UNFPA Champion to end GBV.

Dr. Kanem commended President Rajoelina on his nomination as the African Union's Champion to fight Malnutrition in the continent; as well as his continued support towards UNFPA's work and mandate in general. She lauded the President's support to the Nairobi summit, his involvement in the country launch of the Road to Nairobi and the commitments that Madagascar pledged, reiterating UNFPA's support to translate the commitments to action.

Dr. Kanem pledged UNFPA support to Madagascar in ending maternal mortality, including through ongoing programs on capacity building of health workers – particularly mid-wives and nurses.



*Girls and Women receiving kits during the COVID-19 pandemic in Madagascar @UNFPAMadagascar*



*Nurses and Midwives working on the forefront during the pandemic @UNFPAMadagascar*



*Midwives keeping mothers in the front and center for maternal care during the COVID-19 Pandemic @UNFPAMadagascar*



## UNFPA Participation during the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development.

UNFPA in Collaboration with the African Union Commission and ECA organized a side event on youth on the margins of the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development



United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations System convened the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD6) which was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe from 24-27 February 2020 under the theme: “2030: A decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”.

The forum, which was officially opened by H.E Mr. Emmerson Mnangagwa, involved over 3000 participants, including ministers and senior officials across the continent. The UNFPA delegation, which was led by the former ESARO Regional Director Dr. Julita Onabanjo, comprised of staff from the Head Quarters, Liaison Office to the AUC/ECA, ESARO and Zimbabwe Country Office.

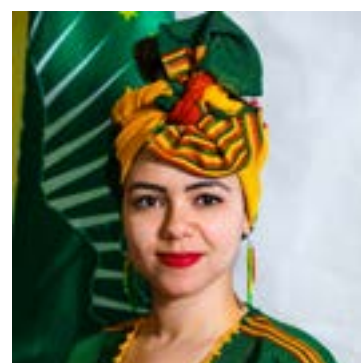
Several side-events were co-hosted by UNFPA and partners, and included the following: UNFPA-LO in partnership with the Regional Offices namely ASRO and ESARO, ECA, and the Commission of the African Union organized a side event under the theme: ‘The future is now: African Youth Engagement for the Decade of Action’ to address best practices for monitoring of ICPD based SDGs post Nairobi Summit.

A second Youth Forum aimed to ensure that young people know that their voices will be heard, their experiences will be acknowledged and their ideas will be anchored in the policymaking process. Held within the framework of UN@75, this forum was organized jointly by UNFPA, as the co-convenor of the gender and youth sub-cluster of the AU-UN regional coordination mechanism, together with United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

The Youth Forum identified creative ideas for the future

of multilateralism to achieve the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs as well as Agenda 2063, and fostered youth engagement in their communities and at a global scale. The key messages from the forum will inform discussions and recommendations at the ECOSOC youth forum to be held in New York, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the UN 75 anniversary, and the High Level Political Forum. Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, opened the intergenerational dialogue by underscoring the crucial role of young people in underpinning a strong multilateral system pegged on intergenerational co-leadership, where young people are co-leading, co-driving and co-creating policies that work for them. She urged the young people to speak truth to power in support of a strengthened multilateral system led by the UN.

Aya Chebbi, the African Union Youth Envoy, echoed the need for intergenerational policy making processes to ensure optimism for a better future, through co-leadership with the youth to address challenges of exclusion and ensure that “we leave no one behind”.



Ms. Aya Chebbi- African Union Youth Envoy

The key challenges highlighted by the young people zeroed in on youth unemployment and the need to be equipped to harness the 4th industrial revolution. Some of the recommendations proposed the need for strong youth inclusion, including in peace and security, and accelerated integration in to various levels of globalization.

Opening the Plenary Session on People, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, Former UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, reflected on the progress made on “People” in Africa, using the lens of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10. Drawing from the Forum’s Issue Paper on People, the presentation adopted a broader rights-based perspective and set the tone for the high level panel discussion and interactions with the audience.

The panel included the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education of Zimbabwe, Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare of Gambia, Head of Health, Nutrition and Population of the African Union Commission and senior regional representatives from FAO, UNESCO and WHO.

While progress has been recorded in reducing poverty and hunger, and improving health, education, gender equality and women’s empowerment, the pace and scale of progress remains slow. Dr. Onabanjo highlighted the interlinkages of the SDGs under the People pillar and introduced SDG 10 on reducing inequality, considering the widening gap across all forms of inequality. The People session placed the emphasis

on the importance of people-centered and rights-based sustainable development across all acceleration actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

She highlighted underlying drivers that continue to limit progress on the continent, including weak systems and structures across institutions and communities, limiting cultural and social norms, unfulfilled rights especially of marginalized population groups, weak governance, constrained financing from domestic and international sources, and increasing shocks from climate action, conflicts and humanitarian situations.



Primarily focused on investing in human capital in the decade of action, Dr. Onabanjo put forward acceleration actions aimed at increasing the pace and scale of progress by ensuring Rights and Choices for ALL.

These are: (i) people-centered financing aimed at increasing investments to the social sector; (ii) inclusive and diversified economy to ensure sustained economic growth



Dr. Jullita Onabanjo- 6 ARFSD- February 2020  
Regional Director of East and Southern Africa Regional Office.

across diverse sectors (above 7 per cent growth) with job creation for working-age population; (iii) inclusive social protection systems backed by legislation to leave no one behind (LNOB); (iv) strengthening partnerships by expanding the partnership base to public, civil society and private sector;

south-south collaboration to facilitate sharing and cooperation on regional integration, transboundary and cross-border issues; (v) building resilience in social systems: increasing adaptation actions in the social sector; and (vi) effective governance, including needed reforms, and strengthened legislation, regulation and coordination.

Dr. Onabanjo positioned the power of data - harmonized layers, integrated, disaggregated - as an accelerator in the Decade of Action to Leave No One Behind. Leveraging innovation and modern technology for generation and analysis will enable identification of hotspots, pockets of deprivation, and effective targeting of resources and interventions to reach the furthest behind first.

The session served as the basis for the conclusions and key messages of the People pillar.

Across the sessions on Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnership, UNFPA emphasized the need to accelerate the pace and scale of implementation of rights-based inclusive development through messaging on:

Accelerating the achievement of commitments and recommendations of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD);

Harnessing the demographic dividend, including an emphasis on the nexus between the Demographic Dividend, youth peace and security.

Centrality of sexual and reproductive health and rights to achieving universal health coverage;

Importance of eliminating gender inequality and gender-based violence to achieving sustainable development; SRHR and women's empowerment as essential pillars for climate change adaptation and response; Harnessing the power of data and innovation to leaving no one behind.

Key messages from the joint RCM-ARFSD Youth Forum were captured in the Forum Report.

[More on the ARFSD and side events can be found here](#)

## Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is a Significant Public Health Issue that Requires High Attention During the Pandemic.

Emergency response to the COVID-19 outbreak also means that resources for sexual and reproductive health services may be diverted to deal with the outbreak, contributing to a rise in maternal and newborn mortality, increased unmet need for contraception, and increased number of unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections. Around the world, women make up seventy percent of health and social service workers. Midwives, nurses and community health workers are on the front lines of efforts to combat and contain outbreaks of disease and require personal protective equipment (PPE). Safe pregnancy and childbirth depend on sufficient numbers of skilled healthcare personnel, midwives in particular, and adequate facilities for



providing essential and emergency quality care 24/7. Respiratory illnesses in pregnant women, particularly COVID-19 infections, must be treated with utmost priority due to increased risk of adverse outcomes. Infection control measures must include proper segregation of suspected, possible and confirmed cases from antenatal care, neonatal and maternal health units.

Surveillance and response systems for women of reproductive age and pregnant women should be in place, including in antenatal clinics. There is currently no evidence to support vertical mother-to-child transmission of COVID-19. Provision of family planning and other sexual and reproductive health services and commodities, including those related to menstrual health, are central to women and girls' health, empowerment, and dignity, and may be impacted as supply chains undergo strains from COVID-19 pandemic response.



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## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OF UNFPA WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

UNFPA is engaging with private sector partners at global, regional, and country level in support of the COVID-19 response through partnerships for resource mobilization, outreach and innovative solutions to meet immediate, medium and long term needs. Among these engagements is the launch of COVID-19 Global campaign with a network of more than 20 partner organizations and Prezi using innovative video assets customized by young people, translated (25 languages available to date) and adapted to local context under the hashtag: #YouthAgainstCOVID19. Check out videos and Learn more [HERE](#):

**Hear from young people around the world**

<p>REUSABLE VIDEO Episode 4: Youth, Mental Health and COVID-19 Karan Jerath</p>	<p>REUSABLE VIDEO Episode 2: How are young people affected by COVID-19? Bertha Tobing</p>	<p>REUSABLE VIDEO Youth Against COVID-19 Episode 1: COVID 101 Nayoung Yoon</p>
<p>REUSABLE VIDEO Episodio 4: Salud Mental Bajo Covid-19 Maria Alonzo-perez</p>	<p>REUSABLE VIDEO #若者が立ち向かうCOVID19 エピソード1 Shinnosuke Senda</p>	<p>REUSABLE VIDEO Sexo, Saúde Sexual e COVID-19 Ozela Barros</p>

Learn more: <https://prezi.com/landing/youthagainstcovid19/>

## MEET THE LIAISON OFFICE TEAM



Caroline Ngonze,  
UNFPA LO Resident Representative  
and Chief (a.i.)



Samuel Kissi,  
Policy and Advocacy Specialist



Brian Mahuso,  
Policy and Advocacy Associate



Fikru Tizazu,  
Administrative and Finance Associate



Alemayehu Liben  
Protocol Officer and Senior  
Driver.



Sophia Ali  
Communication and Liaison Associate  
and PA.