

**"Libreville Declaration"**

**"The 1st Meeting of African Women Judges"**

Under the theme:

***"The presence of African women in the judiciary: assessment and perspectives",***

Libreville, Gabon, from 02 to 06 May 2023

**With the support of UNDP, UN DC and UN Women**

**(Draft)**

We, Participants in **"The 1st** Meeting of **African Women Judges", gathered in Libreville from 2 to 6 May 2023,** to share and promote practices that strengthen the judiciary in order to promote and enhance the role and position of women in the judiciary;

This "Meeting", the first of its kind in Africa and attended by no less than thirty-five (35) African countries, aims to create a framework for reflection on the obstacles faced by African women judges in their careers, and to reflect on the prospects for their development.

The participants in this "Meeting":

-Noting the lack of impartiality in the processes of appointment of women judges in judicial systems and the limitations in the processes of their selection and recruitment to the judiciary;

-Aware of the capacity of women to demonstrate leadership in the field of justice;

-Recognizing that the inclusion and presence of women in the judiciary has had a positive impact;

-Deeply concerned that barriers to access to justice disproportionately affect women;

-Determined to remove barriers to women's opportunities for access to justice in decision-making;

-Committed to strengthening the presence of women in judicial leadership positions; and improving access to justice;

The holding of the first "Encounter" of African women judges was an opportunity to take stock of the presence of African women in the judicial system, to discuss and agree on concrete recommendations on the prospects to enable further progress in women's leadership in Africa as an entry point for better justice for all in the region.

Women's right to participate fully and equally with men in all aspects of public life, including the judiciary, is widely recognized as a human right.

To date, 49 of Africa's 55 countries have adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). This important regional human rights instrument calls for equality before the law and equal representation of women in judicial and law enforcement bodies (Article 8).

In recent years, some African countries have taken steps to appoint more women judges and prosecutors at the national level. The number of women judges has increased considerably in African countries, reaching 50 per cent of judges in some countries.

At the regional level, at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, out of 11 judges, 5 are women, including the President of the Court.

Despite these efforts, the overall representation of women in African judicial institutions remains very low and gender parity in the judicial systems of many countries on the continent has not yet been achieved, with many women judges less represented in judicial leadership positions. This is the case in some African countries, where the representation of women in the positions of head of jurisdiction remains very limited, with women mainly represented in lower courts or as registrars.

Barriers to women's entry into the judiciary in Africa include cultural, legal, institutional, and social aspects.

In the light of the valuable remarks and laborious exchanges shared during the work of the Meeting, the Presidents and Representatives of the Courts, Constitutional Councils and Supreme Courts as well as the organizations participating in the "Meeting", undertake to further develop the framework for cooperation on the issue of access of African women to the judiciary and to develop many more activities aimed at institutionalizing the debate among the African jurisdictions.

They hereby undertake to launch the following actions:

1. Identification of the main obstacles faced by women in entering the judicial career and women judges in obtaining promotion in the justice sector;
2. Identification of good practices that can be replicated elsewhere;
3. Exchanges and stocktaking on the state of gender equality in judicial systems in Africa;
4. Increased awareness of the benefits of gender equality in the justice system, including through the sharing of good practices in other African countries;
5. The institutionalization among the member jurisdictions of the CJCA, of the "Meeting" so that it is an annual framework for debate and exchange of experiences on the presence of African women in the judiciary;
6. Creation of the network of African women judges, including through a dedicated online platform;
7. Identification of concrete measures and follow-up mechanisms to help increase the presence and strategic positioning of women in judicial institutions;
8. Reflection on the sustainability of these meetings within the framework of a regional forum and identification of possible themes to be discussed at future meetings.

Participants express their deep thanks to international organizations, UN Women, UN DC, the International Association of Women Judges, and in particular UNDP for their support and commitment to the advancement of women judges in Africa.

The participants take this opportunity to express their sincere thanks and deep gratitude to the Honourable Justice, **Mrs. Marie Madeleine MBORANTSUO** President of the Constitutional Court of the Gabonese Republic, for her distinguished presidency of the Conference, and for what she has done for the development and development of women judges in Africa.

They express their feelings of deep gratitude.

Done at Libreville, Wednesday, May 4, 2023.