

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2018

## PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE THEME

“Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women’s lives”

As part of the celebrations to mark the International Women’s Day 2018, the African Centre for Gender of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is organizing a Panel Discussion on the theme *Time is Now: Rural and Urban activists transforming women’s lives*. The event will be held on 8 March 2018 from 11:00 a.m. to 13:00 p.m. in Conference Room 5 at the United Nations Conference Centre.

## BACKGROUND

March 8 is celebrated globally as International Women’s Day. On this day, the achievements made by women in all spheres of life are celebrated. The theme for International Women’s Day 2018 is “**Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women’s lives**”.

The realization of human rights and the empowerment of women and girls are enshrined in various international and regional human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In turn, the realization of human rights and the empowerment of women and girls are necessary for the achievement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Agenda 2063, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its associated Sustainable Development Goals.

The human rights instruments and development frameworks provide a number of human rights to women and girls. These include, among others, the right to land and land tenure security, food and nutrition, quality and affordable education and health care, and to live a life free of violence, discrimination and harmful practices.

Countries have made considerable progress in incorporating the principles and provisions of the human rights instruments in their national constitutions, legislation and policies, adopting legislation, policies and other measures prohibiting discrimination against women, and amending and repealing laws, regulations, customs and practices that are discriminatory. However, women and girls continue to face barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights.

This state of affairs is partly due to the existence of customary laws that are often discriminatory and deny women and girls full enjoyment of their rights afforded to them under national constitutions and statutory laws. Another factor is inadequate allocation of organizational, human, technical and financial resources to the justice system to ensure that non-discriminatory laws are effectively enforced and women have effective access to justice. This is especially important for women and girls in rural areas.

Despite these challenges, African women activists have risen to the occasion to organize themselves and to highlight the importance of women's full and equal participation in socioeconomic and political and public life of their countries. These activists continue to work hard to enhance women's awareness of their rights and the means to claim these rights, as well as promote dialogue on women issues, and engage and influence governments at the highest level on issues of relevance to women and girls.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of the Panel Discussion is to celebrate the important contribution of African women activists who are working tirelessly to support women to claim their socio-economic and political rights, and realize their full potential in all spheres of life.

## **PANELISTS**

The panel will be made up of three Panelists and one Moderator. In addition to moderating the session, the Moderator will also introduce the theme in an analytical manner. The Panelists will highlight success stories and challenges involved in transforming women's lives. The Panelists are as follows:

**A women's right activist from the Ethiopian's Women Association and/or other associations:** she will speak about the advocacy work they have been doing to profile women's rights (make them a reality), success stories, including enhancement of women's voice and agency; challenges faced, etc.

**An urban woman activist in the economic sector who is working to promote women's and girls' economic empowerment.** She will speak about her story/ commitment and the translation of the latter into actions, success stories, challenges.

**A rural women activist** who will also speak about her commitment, story, actions and impacts /success stories and challenges.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Representatives of women's organizations and international organizations, the media, and the staff of ECA and other UN entities are invited to attend the Panel Discussion.

### **For further information, please contact:**

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