MESSAGE FROM DR RITA BISSOONAUTH, AU / CIEFFA
COORDINATOR FOR THE 2017 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

(Femmes battantes, Burkina Faso : Crédit UA/CIEFFA)
1. This year, the international community is celebrating the International Women’s Day with the following theme: "Women in a changing world of work: a 50-50 planet by 2030". This theme from the United Nations reinforces the urgency of implementing the AU Gender Architecture, which foresees gender parity in order to achieve gender equality and Women’s empowerment in Africa.

2. The Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) of the UN Agenda 2030 foresees "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". SDG 5 is in line with the objectives of the AU Agenda 2063 and its 10-year plan of action (2013-2023), which outlines in its aspiration 6 "An Africa Whose Development is people driven, relying on the potential of the African People, particularly its Women and Youth and well cared for children."

3. Indeed, if Goal 15 of Agenda 2063, which aims to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life, is considered as a prerequisite for the empowerment of African women, there is no doubt that Goal 2 of the Plan of Action of Agenda 2063 underscores "giving African citizens quality education and a Revolution of Skills and Talents underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation", which is a lever for eliminating gender disparities.
4. The theme of the International Women's Day 2017 "Women in a changing world of work: a 50-50 planet by 2030" has two facets:

4a. In order to have a world without discrimination and gender-based violence and without disparities by 2030, the international community, and in particular the African countries, should be able to put at the benefit of African girls and women, quality education, gender-sensitive education with the implementation of existing policies ratified by the AU member countries. "A girl well-educated at school will have full potential to assert herself later in the world of work, no matter how competitive it may be"

4b. At the end of her qualifying training and with proven expertise, the girl will become an autonomous woman in the economic, social and, of course, political spheres, and so parity should go hand-in-hand.

5. The African Union International Center for Girls 'and Women's Education in Africa (AU / CIEFFA), as an AU Specialized Institution, works to ensure that girls' education is part of the Development agenda of african countries. Our mission is to promote and advocate for the implementation of the legal and institutional framework on girls' right to access, retention and
transition from secondary school to university whose framework has been adopted and often ratified at national, regional (RECs), continental (AU) and global (UN) levels.

6. Our goal is to ensure that education be universal without any disparities based on gender, social class, economic status or disability. We strongly advocate for education based on an inclusive approach, promoting gender-sensitive teaching and learning systems, educational textbooks and tools without any gender stereotypes.

7. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) notes that the enrollment rates of girls in African countries are between 30 and 35 per cent of the total enrollment and that, often, the poor academic performance of girls in relation to Boys are linked to discriminatory attitudes, gender stereotypes and many other factors that tend to discourage girls. In conclusion, we aspire to a revolutionary education allowing girls to learn, and these girls will later become skilled women with technical, scientific and diplomatic expertise, those areas, which are generally men-dominated!

8. Also, in line with the 2017 theme of the IWD, Goal 1 of Agenda 2063 aims to improve and increase the quality of life of African women and young people by putting means at work in order to decrease their unemployment rate by 2% per year.
9. Unfortunately, despite progress made in recognizing women's informal work in Africa, much remains to be done for women's access to decent, paid and secure work.

10. On this day I would like to join the Voice of the AU / CIEFFA at the International Campaign of the 2017 International Day by encouraging you to tweet on #BeBoldForChange # = #SoyezAudacieux Pour le Changement #

11. A change that can only happen if the girl child is enrolled in school, learns and stays there in order to acquire all the scientific, technical and literary skills, and so on, in order to achieve a world of Fairer and more equitable work.

12. I would like to conclude my message by wishing all women, and men alike, a very good day and celebration of the IWD 2017.

Thank you !!

DR RITABISSOONAUTH, AU / CIEFFA COORDINATOR