



12th REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA AND ARAB COUNTRIES
22-25 September, Gaborone, Botswana

AFRECON WOMEN'S MEETING REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On Wednesday 22nd September, the AFRECON 2015 Women's meeting was held to discuss priority campaigns on gender equality and the way forward. The meeting was attended by 100 women from all sub-regions and presided by Ritta Thandeka Msibi, PSI Vice President, DENOSA, South Africa and Naomi Dedei Otoo, Chair of PSI Africa Women's Committee, Public Utility Workers' Union of TUC Ghana.

The meeting focused on three major themes as follows:

- 1. Precarious work**
- 2. Ending violence against women**
- 3. Gender equality and global policies – from Global to Local**

PRECARIOUS WORK is a challenge in Africa and the Arab countries and it increasingly affects public workers. In terms of retrenchment, downsizing and privatization women bear the brunt. Privatization is seen as one of the key processes that lead to precarious jobs. Youth are affected to a point that they graduate with good qualifications but still end up without jobs or underpaid, informal employment without social protection. We have to campaign against informal employment in the informal economy, but also against growing precarity in the public sector, including in the health sector.

The meeting proposed to focus advocacy and campaigns on

- Decent jobs for women
- Organizing precarious workers and ensuring their labour, social and trade union rights
- Raise the profile of on-going actions in support of precarious health workers and build cross-regional cooperation
- Inclusion of women in decision-making organs at all levels of unions
- Trade unions should have trainings aimed at capacity building young women on how to deal with precarious work.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY - Whereas women have equal status with men in law in terms of employment, women in Africa and Arab countries continue to be discriminated and are often victims of violence. Domestic violence tends to be seen as a family issue and discrimination at work is rife. Trade unions need to take action to address violence against women – both at home, at work and in society.

The following needs to be done towards eliminating violence against women

- Ending violence against women has to be a priority for the entire trade union movement and included as a priority issue in collective bargaining
- Women in trade unions should form synergies with CSOs and governments to build policies, including through the adoption of an international labour standard on violence at the workplace
- Put in place policies on sexual harassment
- Encourage workplace awareness campaigns
- Set up union education programmes for all members on gender based violence
- Have men involved in the campaign against gender based violence
- Promote the creation of gender desks in police stations

GENDER EQUALITY AND GLOBAL POLICIES – FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL

The committee observed that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) No. 5 promotes the equality and empowerment of all women and girls. The outcome of the Financing for Development of Addis Ababa Action Agenda encourages Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) including essential services which are important in

ensuring gender equality and better lives for women. PPPs will also lead to precarious work as the aim of private sectors is profit maximization.

In this regard, the committee recommends:

1. A concerted effort in continuous fight against PPPs
2. A call on international bodies to curb tax evasions that continue eroding funds meant to provide essential services that enhance women equality
3. Involvement of women in the structures that fight tax injustice

The gender perspective of PSI Regional Action Plan 2015-18 for Africa and Arab Countries

1. Fighting privatization at regional, sub regional and country levels

- Women´s Committees: will reach civil society women coalitions and identify which of them are working on anti-privatization, taxation or related issues and propose to them joint actions
- Unions are to identify differentiated impact of privatization on men and women and publish them strategically to block privatization.
- Encourage women participation in sectoral networks in order to actively contribute and address the impacts of privatization.
- Organize a day of national, sub-regional and regional action of women against privatization

2. Advancing trade union and human rights

- Women´s Committees: will propose each year a priority country for the elaboration of union´s observations on the implementation on ILO Conventions, integrating as a whole the following Conventions: 87, 98, 151, 154, 100, 111, 103, 183 and 156. These observations will be presented to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.
- Propose a pilot sectoral study on pay gap.
- Lobby key governments for their endorsement of new ILO Convention on Violence against gender-based violence.
- Unions: should appoint a woman and a man as contact persons to respond to urgent trade union actions, as well to follow up on the elaboration and submission of complaints and observations to ILO Mechanisms.

3. Organizing and recruitment

- Women´s Committees: will recommend gender equality strategies (countries/sectors/young women) to be integrated in the elaboration of recruitment and organizing strategies.
- Propose priority themes to be integrated on sectoral work plans at all levels.

4. Promoting solidarity support

- Women´s Committees: will recommend a gender approach based on solidarity as a trade union principle, but also in sisterhood.

5. Influencing regional and sub-regional policies

- Women´s Committees: will reach civil society women´s coalitions and other international trade union women´s committees to identify which of them are working on women´s economic empowerment and propose them joint actions for influencing the implementation of the Post 2015 development agenda and CSW (each year).
- Unions: will integrate women´s economic empowerment within Africa and the Arab countries in their priorities for reaching and lobbying governments and regional institutions.