Statement of the AUC Chairperson’s Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security on the occasion of the commemoration of the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.


Today, 19 June 2016, we commemorate the first International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. It is a date set aside, to raise awareness on the need for collective action, to condemn and to end conflict-related sexual violence – which has been used as a weapon of war – inflicting immense physical and psychological injuries on women and children who continue to bear the brunt of the various conflicts on our continent.

From the Democratic Republic of Congo to Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and the Central African Republic, we have seen young girls and boys abducted, sexually abused and traumatized.

Today we stand in solidarity with victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), in conflict, especially girls, and boys, whose bodies have been abused and desecrated by warmongers, and sadly sometimes by officers entrusted to protect them – on behalf of well-meaning organizations and countries. Indeed we honor victims and survivors of sexual violence around the world and pay tribute to all who have bravely devoted their lives to ensuring human rights and human dignity.

Through its zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence, the African Union (AU) is committed to ensuring accountability in its peace support operations. The
AU has developed many legal instruments and mechanisms, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to prevent violence and to protect women, children and the vulnerable.

Three days ago, I commemorated the Day of the African Child with the refugee communities in Gambella, Ethiopia, who fled the fighting in South Sudan. Thousands of children, women and men who despite having witnessed the horrors of war are hopeful for peace and better opportunities. We cannot afford to let them down. Let’s act now and bring to an end this scourge of sexual violence in conflict in Africa, and indeed worldwide.