REPORT OF THE ROUNDTABLE (VIRTUAL) ON “WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING LEADERSHIP: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS” HELD ON THURSDAY 4 JUNE 2020 IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE SECRETARIAT OF AFRICAN PEACE SUPPORT TRAINERS ASSOCIATION, QUARTIER GOLF, YAOUNDE CAMEROON

INTRODUCTION


2. A total of 17 participants took part in the Roundtable Webinar. Seven (7) participants joined via Zoom from 6 different countries, while 10 participants from Cameroon were physically present in the Secretariat, including a Special Guest of Honour, the Representative of the Minister of External Relations (MINREX), Republic of Cameroon, Madam Cecile MBALLA EYENGA as well as other dignitaries. The event was conducted in the Conference Room of APSTA Secretariat in strict compliance with social distancing health measures as stipulated by the Government of Cameroon. Participants addressed the main objective of the Roundtable, interrogating lingering issues and challenges in the participation of women in peacekeeping especially at the strategic-leadership levels, through sharing of experiences and lessons. The Roundtable was moderated by Prof. Jean Emmanuel Ponddi and was accorded wide media coverage in local press, including by the National TV Station: Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) as well as the Cameroon Tribune online. The CRTV aired highlights of the event during the 8PM news. Participants list is enclosed.

KEY FINDINGS

3. Participants extensively discussed critical issues, challenges, experiences and lessons emanating from women participation in peacekeeping and peace support operations at all levels, and specifically challenges of participation at strategic or leadership levels. They underscored the following key findings as summarized below:

   a. Improvement or attainment of parity in women participation is still stalled by barriers of family, cultural and occupational norms; military hierarchy; discrimination; lower access to strategic-level training and capacity building; lower levels of sensitization; as well as entrenched impression on women participation in missions as a “favour” rather than a right, reiterated by the provisions of UNSCR 1325.
b. Number of uniformed women in strategic and leadership positions in peace and security remain insignificant due to lower access to operational and strategic-level training particularly at Staff, War and Defence Colleges; their exclusion from leadership responsibilities/opportunities including mission planning as well as the absence of structured/institutionalized mentorship for prospective women leaders.

c. Women participation as well as their impact especially in the Armed Forces remains marginal due to very low integration in combat units and in decision-making processes; and general relegation of women to support units and functions.

d. Gender awareness, training and mainstreaming especially among the top-brass military leadership across the continent remains a daunting gap, with debilitating implications and consequences for women participation as well as the implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda.

e. Women are significantly not daring enough in applying for leadership positions pursuant to vacancy announcements/advertisements from UN, AU or other sources, mainly due to lack of professionalized training or capacity building for specified mission roles.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

4. In consideration of these critical issues and challenges as well as experiences and lessons shared, participants further proffered the following recommendations for Training Centres/Institutions, APSTA, Governments, and AU among others:

a. Training Centres/Institutions and APSTA should organize more leadership training and capacity building programmes/courses for women and cultivate women interest in training on the basis of gender mainstreaming.

b. Training Centres/Institutions and APSTA should aggressively advocate the inclusion of uniformed women in Staff, War and Defence Colleges training programmes by respective Governments.

c. Training Centres/Institutions and APSTA should ensure the rostering of trained women as well as advocate the delivery of regular leadership trainings and capacity building for ‘rostered’ women by Training Centres/Institutions, Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and African Union, among others.

d. Training Centres/Institutions and APSTA should advocate the reservation of one-third of slots for women (especially in armed forces) at all senior mission leadership training across the continent, to fill identified strategic-level capacity building gaps in women participation in peace and security.

e. APSTA should establish a platform or Forum for meeting of senior mission leaders (civilian, police and military) for institutionalized experience and lessons sharing as well as mentorship for prospective mission leaders.

f. APSTA should establish a roster of qualified prospective women senior mission leaders, for advisory services to the UN and AU prior to deployment.
g. APSTA should establish database of vacancies for senior mission positions specifically for women to serve as advisory for prospective women peacekeepers.

h. APSTA should promote establishment of women group networks by respective government ministries for addressing human resource challenges on women participation in peace and security especially deployment of missions.

i. Training Centres/Institutions and APSTA should establish mechanism to monitor and report on progress or lack thereof, on implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) for the improvement of women participation in peace missions and specifically the Women Peace and Security Agenda pursuant to UNSCR 1325.

**CONCLUSION**

5. The critical recommendations proffered during the Roundtable further underscore the imperative for coordination, harmonization and standardization of training as well as policy advocacy for capacity building on various aspects of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) including the African Standby Force. Therefore, the APSTA Secretariat is engaging with Member Institutions (MIs), RECs/RMs via MIs and the African Union Commission (AUC) in implementing these recommendations.