In accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, this report provides an update on promotional activities conducted since the 55th Ordinary Session held in Luanda (Angola) in May 2014.

It covers activities undertaken in my capacity as:

1. Commissioner;
2. Member of the HIV/AIDS Committee; and

I - Activities undertaken in my capacity as Commissioner

1. Kigali: 17, 18 and 19 July 2014
I participated in the statutory meeting between the Commission and the African Court on matters of common interest with a view to enhancing complementarity between the two organs in the area of human rights protection on the continent.

2. As a member of the Organizing committee of activities in celebration of 2016 declared “African year of human rights with particular focus on the rights of women”, I participated in meetings with the Minister of Justice of Rwanda and his collaborators as well as with the Minister in charge of gender issues to discuss expectations and proposals of the Committee regarding Rwanda’s involvement in the organization of events to mark this year of human rights.

3. From 20 to 29 July 2014
I participated in the 16th Extraordinary Session of the ACHPR in Kigali where several communications on seizure, admissibility and the merits were considered. At this session, the African Commission also adopted resolutions on specific situations/countries, concluding
observations and various other reports and documents prepared by special mechanisms.

II- Activities conducted in my capacity as member of the HIV/AIDS committee

4. From 6 to 7 June 2014

Members of the HIV Committee organized a consultative technical meeting in Pretoria (South Africa) on the issues and provisional findings of the study that was commissioned on “HIV, the Law and Human Rights in the African Human Rights System: Key Challenges, Best Practices and Opportunities for Rights-based Responses to HIV”.

5. The objective of the meeting was to create the momentum for the Committee to take the study forward and discuss, with experts identified by the Centre for Human Rights in Pretoria and other technical and financial partners involved in the fight against HIV, the relevance of sub-themes as well as the need to update the terms of reference so as to better address current realities of the AIDS epidemic in areas covered by the research.

6. Issues discussed among experts and participants also included: HIV, law and human rights; equality and non-discrimination in the context of HIV; responsibilities of State Parties to the African Charter; sexual and reproductive health rights of women living with HIV; HIV testing and related human rights issues; criminalisation of HIV transmission in Africa; harmful cultural practices and traditional beliefs in the context of HIV; and finally intellectual property rights and access to ARVs in Africa.

7. Participants also discussed draft guidelines on HIV for States Parties. This document will include all relevant information that should be available to ACHPR during consideration of periodic reports.
8. Participants at the Pretoria meeting agreed on the relevance of the study, especially at a time when States Parties tend to be less interested in the financing of awareness-raising campaigns, ARVs and economic empowerment of PLHIVs.

9. From 12 to 13 December 2014
The Committee met in Brazzaville to discuss further on how to ensure that members take ownership and move the study forward. The various tasks were hence assigned. The 2015 work programme of the Committee was also discussed and adopted.

III- Activities conducted as Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa

A-Collaboration with States Parties

10. From 28 to 30 October 2014

The Mechanism organized in Bamako, in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Child and Family Affairs, a high-level meeting on the “Impact of conflict on the rights of women and girls”. The objective was to initiate discussions with all actors involved in the political and security crisis in Mali, including the relevant ministries, MINUSMA, MISAHEL, the African Union, ECOWAS, CNDH and women’s NGOs, on actions undertaken, lessons learned and strategies to be developed for enhanced coordination among them. The level of participation of women in mediation, inter-community reconciliation and development actions, particularly in conflict-affected regions, was also assessed.

11. Participants made several recommendations to the different authorities and partners.
B- Collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

12. 23 June 2014

I participated at a panel discussion, organized in Geneva by OHCHR on the margins of the 26th Session of the HRC, on the theme “Preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriages”.

13. In its resolution 24/23, the HRC decided to convene, at its 26th session, a panel discussion on the topic. To guide the discussion, OHCHR prepared a report with a particular focus on challenges, achievements, best practices and gaps in the implementation of related national legislation and policies. The report was enhanced with contributions from States, NGOs and UN specialized agencies.

14. Prior to its transmission to UNGA, the report should be discussed with regional mechanisms for the promotion of the rights of women and girls in order to seek their input on the role that they can play in eliminating harmful practices, on past experiences, religious and cultural practices that affect the lives of victims as well as successful programmes and interventions for protection of their rights.

15. My presentation focused on the root causes behind the persistence and magnitude of the phenomenon in Africa, disparities between legislation and practices, as well as initiatives undertaken by the Mechanism to combat early and child marriages in collaboration with NGOs and with the Committee on the rights and welfare of the child. These include, inter alia, the on-going elaboration of general comments on early marriage as well as studies initiated on the same subject in partnership with the Pretoria Human Rights Centre covering ten States Parties where prevalence rates are very high, with prejudicial consequences (that have been extensively documented) on the lives and health of women and girls.

16. From 8 to 9 October 2014
I participated at an international workshop organized in Geneva on cooperation between the UN and regional human rights mechanisms. Implementation of the road map on collaboration between the African Commission and UN special mechanisms was assessed.

17. My presentation at this workshop focused on the social, economic and cultural rights of women in Africa, laying emphasis on pertinent innovations contained in the Maputo Protocol, challenges, opportunities and prospects for African women in RECs, as well as in the informal sector, with regard to their economic empowerment.

18. 10 October 2014

I participated in a workshop in Geneva organized by the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice. It was organized as a follow-up to recommendations issued at a previous workshop in October 2013 attended by regional mechanisms on the rights of women in the Americas, Europe, OIC, Africa and South Asia. The objective of the Working Group was to identify discrimination against women that persist in family and cultural life as well as best practices and positive measures for enhancing the status of women. Contributions of the different regional mechanisms shall be included in the thematic report to be presented to the HRC by the Working Group in June 2015.

C – Seminars and meetings with civil society organizations, organs and other partners involved in promoting the rights of women

19. From 18 to 19 June 2014

I participated in the 24th pre-summit consultative meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union (GIMAC) in Malabo. Over 55 local and regional civil society organizations of women and young people discussed the theme: “Women in agriculture and food
security”. Other key issues were also discussed such as Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 Agenda, reproductive health and rights, emerging conflicts on the continent, violence against women and girls, education, and the need to adopt the best possible strategy to ensure GIMAC recommendations are taken into consideration by the Summit of Heads of State and Government.

20. The central theme, “Women in agriculture and food security in Africa” is directly related to the sexual and reproductive health of young girls and women. Recommendations were made to guarantee the physical safety of women, genuinely involve them in agricultural policies, and ensure they have access to land as well as agricultural inputs and credit.

21. The session of 19 June 2014 was chaired by Mrs. Zuma and attended by Commissioner Aicha Abdoulah as well as several African ministers in charge of Gender. The AU Agenda 2063 was presented followed by discussions.

22. The following priority areas were identified by participants, including ministers, for advancing the socio-economic development of women: adequate financial resources for institutional mechanisms on promoting the rights of women; reproductive health; education and literacy; the role and place of women in agriculture and food security; the urgent need to ensure women’s access to land, inputs, water, energy, financing and markets; rural women and their lack of opportunities; insufficient exchanges among women from different countries; violence and the lack of effective strategies against impunity in this area; and the place of young people in employment policies.

23. For my part, I insisted on democracy, good governance, justice and human rights pointing out the need to implement legal instruments, in particular the Maputo Protocol, and report to the ACHPR on measures taken by States Parties for its implementation.
24. The persistence of harmful practices such as early marriage and FGM were singled out as obstacles to promoting the rights of girls to education, personal growth, health and access to employment.

25. Discussions continued with Mrs. Zuma and ministers in charge of Gender. The latter highlighted best practices to be shared among countries. Discussions also revolved around the key issue of technical and budgetary resources for implementation of policies, plans and programmes for women and partnerships with UN agencies. Several relevant recommendations were made and included in Summit documents for consideration.

26. From 11 to 13 November 2014

I participated in a capacity-building workshop on State Reporting under the Maputo Protocol. The workshop was organized in Pretoria (South Africa) by the Human Rights Centre of the University of Pretoria. I presented two papers on the rights of women in Africa: progress and challenges and on the Maputo Protocol.

27. From 18 to 20 November 2014

At the invitation of UNECA and the AU, I chaired the continental meeting of experts in Addis and took part in the assessment of the Beijing +20 Platform for Action and Declaration. The twelve priority areas were revisited, progress assessed and persisting challenges identified by experts and African ministerial delegations. A consensus document including priorities of women in Africa and recommendations for enhanced protection of their rights was adopted by the meeting.

28. From 20 to 23 January 2015

I took part, in Addis, in activities of the Pre-Summit on Gender (GIMAC) with the African Union Commission, GIMAC members, ministers in charge of Gender, UNWOMEN, UNDP and UNECA.
Discussions and exchanges focused on the theme of the AU Summit, women’s empowerment and development towards Agenda 2063: the change we want. At the end of the meeting, a joint communiqué as well as important recommendations were issued as part of GIMAC’s contribution to ensuring enhanced promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls in Africa.

29. From 24 to 26 January 2015

I took part in the meeting organized in Addis marking 10 years of activism for adoption of the Maputo Protocol by SOAWR, a network comprising 44 NGOs working in the area of women’s rights. Participants identified obstacles to the promotion of the rights of women and developed strategies for ratification of the Protocol and its effective implementation by States Parties.

30. 27 January 2015

I facilitated a workshop on child marriage, in collaboration with the AU Special Rapporteur and the Goodwill Ambassador for the campaign to end child marriage.

The meeting was attended by several technical partners and NGOs working to protect the rights of the child (Plan International, UNICEF, Girls Not Brides).

The objective of the meeting was to coordinate on-going and future activities of the AU Campaign to end child marriage and garner support from organs and States Parties.

31. From 24 to 26 March 2015

I participated, together with several Commissioners and members of the Secretariat, in the IPAS workshop on sexual and reproductive rights organized in Nairobi, in collaboration with ACHPR.
32. From 8 to 9 April 2015

The Mechanism organized in Addis, in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights of Pretoria, a workshop to discuss and prepare general comments on Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol relating to marriages.

E- Note Verbales / Letters of reminder to States Parties

33. Note verbales were sent to the governments of Rwanda, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Mozambique seeking authorization for the conduct of promotion missions. Only Mozambique has responded to date, authorizing a mission in 2015. We are expecting positive responses from the other States.

34. As in the past, reminder letters were sent to States that have not yet ratified the Maputo Protocol, whereas the 11th anniversary of its adoption by the AU Summit of Heads of State in July 2003 has already been celebrated.

35. As a reminder, 38 States have ratified the Protocol. However, none of these States has, in its periodic report, adhered to guidelines provided by the African Commission for monitoring implementation of this instrument.

Press release – Article 26 Declarations

36. The Mechanism published a widely disseminated declaration to mark African Women’s Day on 31 July 2014. The theme chosen by PAWO was “The role and contribution of women and girls in the areas of education, science and technology”.
**Drafting of documents**

37. During the intersession period, drafting of general comments on Article 14 paragraph 2 of the Maputo Protocol on family planning and medical abortions was pursued. The document was edited with the technical and financial support of IPAS Africa Alliance.

38. The Mechanism also worked with civil society organizations to elaborate draft general comments on women’s access to land and productive resources as well as on Article 6 relating to marriages.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

39. Several important events involving State actors, technical and financial partners, NGOs and women’s associations were organized at the national, regional and international levels since the last Ordinary Session and focused on emerging issues and challenges that girls and women continue to face in Africa. African women discussed and assessed the Beijing Platform for Action and formulated several recommendations to African political authorities and to the international community with a view to mobilizing greater financial resources to support empowerment of women, particularly those living in conflict and post-conflict countries. Women who form the GIMAC also put forward relevant recommendations to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on measures to be adopted.

**Recommendations**

A – To the African Union
- Urge member States that have yet to do so, to ratify and/or accelerate the ratification process of the Maputo Protocol;

- Encourage member States having ratified the Protocol to ensure its implementation and submit their periodic reports as soon as possible to the African Commission under the guidelines adopted in this regard;

- Further urge countries that have yet to do so, to submit their annual report on progress they have made in mainstreaming gender into their policies and programmes, in accordance with point 12 of the African Union Declaration on Gender;

- Encourage States to include women in negotiation and dialogue committees as well as in awareness-raising campaigns to restore peace and security in countries affected by conflict.

**A- To Member States**

- Speed up implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa as well as ratification and implementation of the Maputo Protocol for those that are yet to do so;

- Adopt laws and action plans at the country level in respect of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 with a view to ending violence against women and girls and allocate adequate financial resources for implementation of conflict prevention programmes and activities;

- Strengthen peace-building initiatives on the continent while ensuring full and equal participation of women in conflict resolution processes;
- Adopt practical measures to support and speed up women’s access to land and substantially invest in innovation, science and technology with the aim of boosting agricultural production and enhancing the economic conditions of women;

- Adopt a rights-based approach and integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment in all objectives of the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with reference to the Maputo Protocol and all other relevant legal instruments;

- Ensure effective protection of women and girls against all forms of discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence through establishment of effective humanitarian response mechanisms ensuring delivery of appropriate social support and legal assistance that is available and functional./.