YAOUNDE DECLARATION ON THE ROLE OF YOUTHS AND WOMEN IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN CAMEROON

25th February, 2019
PREAMBLE

We, the representatives of students, youth organisations, and women organisations from different walks of life present at the workshop on “The role of youth and women in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)” in Yaoundé on 25th February 2019 recognise that violent extremism in Cameroon is on the rise and it is driven by numerous factors. While greed and grievances stemming from poverty, unemployment, injustice, marginalisation, and challenged identity can lure some young boys, girls and women into violent extremist groups, others are coerced to perpetrate violence because of manipulation or fear. This has resulted in unmeasurable pain and enormous loss of life and destruction of property.

Recognise government efforts towards preventing and countering violent extremist activities and ideologies in Cameroon. However, these initiatives have not fully engaged youths and women as key and reliable allies in building resilience against violent extremism. Rather, some of these initiatives position youths and women as perpetrators of violence or possible victims of recruitment into violent groups. This narrative does not take into account the legendary contributions of young people and women through civic actions and social groupings in providing solutions to the root causes of extremist violence.

Youths and women constitute majority of the population of Cameroon, thus our role in building peace and preventing violent extremism is unequivocal. Our role as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (on women, peace and security), 2250 (on youth, peace and security) and 2419 (on youth in peace processes) reaffirms young people and women as indispensable partners in P/CVE.

We call to mind the resolutions of Commonwealth Heads of Governments (GHOGM) 2018 who recognised the role of young people and women in P/CVE, and called on governments and other stakeholders to support the active involvement of youth and women in finding solutions to the challenges associated with the phenomenon of violent extremism.

Our attention more than ever is focused on building violent-free communities as enshrined in the Cameroon Vision 2035. With this declaration, we share our aspirations of how development stakeholders in Cameroon can effectively support young people and women in P/CVE.
SECTION 1: GOVERNMENT

1.1. Government should accelerate the process of setting up the National Center and develop a National Action Plan for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) with special divisions and sections for youth and women

1.2. The state should promote the involvement of security forces in civic actions within communities to build an environment of tolerance and social cohesion which is key in promoting peace, social justice, human rights, and security

1.3. The Government should initiate inclusive peace processes in resolving conflicts where young people and women are at the forefront.

1.4. The government should promote and fund social enterprises as they have proven to be the most credible path for youth and women engagement in building peace, P/CVE and promoting sustainable development

1.5. The government should include women and youth-led civil society organisations in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national programs especially peace building, human rights and development programmes

SECTION 2: CIVIL SOCIETY

2.1. Empower youth and women groups through context-specific trainings to carry out community initiatives aimed at countering/preventing violent extremism

2.2. Civil society organisation from all walks of life should see peace building as the building block to every intervention they are involved in.

2.3. Civil society organisations working on peace and P/CVE should ensure a 60% quota of youth and women representation and involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their interventions

SECTION 3: PRIVATE SECTOR

3.1. Businesses and Corporate organisations should dedicate corporate social responsibility resources and social impact investments to partnering and funding youth and women organisations and initiatives to carry out peace-building and community development programmes

3.2. They should eradicate gender-biased recruitment, promote gender equality and ensure that their operations do not drive youths to violence

3.3. They should create sustainable, accessible, and equal-opportunity employment and training opportunities for women and young people through remunerated internships and young professional programmes, as it will reduce the rate of unemployment, poverty and idleness, which is one of the greatest tools to radicalising and recruiting young people into violence

3.4. Private sector organisations should organise sensitisation campaigns through sporting events to link up the communities
SECTION 4: RELIGIOUS LEADERS

4.1. Religious leaders should preach messages that strengthen the morals of youth and women which will build hope and inspire them to be ambassadors of peace and change.

4.2. They should provide psychosocial counselling and support to victims, former offenders and families so as to facilitate their rehabilitation and reinsertion.

4.3. Religious leaders must prevent the spread of hate speech and extremist ideologies by providing new, alternative and counter narratives.

4.4. Religious leaders should capitalise on their huge followership and use their alters as a platform to enhance the capacity of youth and women on moral and ethical values, and promote inter-generational skills transfer which fosters trust and social cohesion.

SECTION 5: TRADITIONAL LEADERS

5.1. Traditional authorities should ensure that the customs and traditional principles put in place do not encourage radicalisation, but promote the inclusion of youth and women in safeguarding positive customs and traditions while rejecting harmful ones.

5.2. Traditional authorities should provide safe spaces for youth and women to use community volunteer services to promote peace and non-violence.

5.3. They should work to improve on traditional laws and policies that abuse human rights and ensure that they begin incorporating new and working models for community involvement and development.

5.4. They should ensure youth and women are on the table during decision making processes, and occupy key functions on the community development committees, so they can contribute to decisions that concerns them.

SECTION 6: INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

6.1. The International Community should support and work with youth and women-led civil society organisations to build consolidated and collective partnerships in the prevention of violent extremism.

6.2. They should develop impartial and context specific models to serve as third parties in fostering mediation, negotiation and dialogue between belligerent parties.

6.3. They should provide funding and capacity building for youth and women initiatives in peace building and development so as to support youth and women in the promotion peace.
SECTION 7: YOUTH AND WOMEN ORGANISATIONS

We Commit;

7.1. To collaborate and form inclusive coalitions with our peers and stakeholders towards developing a common front and strategy in preventing and countering violent extremism.

7.2. To engage in evidence based research which will inform government policies and programmes, and stakeholders actions on the drivers, manifestation and potential solutions to violent extremism.

7.3. To build capacities through training, mentorship and coaching of our peers and other stakeholders to build a critical mass of actors with a sound mastery of the youth and gender lens of preventing and countering violent extremism.

7.4. To build on the SDGs in developing strategies and solutions to the drivers of violent extremism.