

WOMEN'S DAY DECLARATION

African and African Diaspora (AAD) Conference "Return to Africa"

*In Partnership with Pan African Women's Ecumenical Empowerment Network
(PAWEEN)*

Johannesburg, South Africa, October 26, 2026

"You are the God who sees me." (Genesis 16:13)

We, African women and women and girls of the African diaspora, gathered in South Africa on the occasion of the Pan-African Conference "Return to Africa," recognize this gathering as part of a long history/herstory of memory, resistance, faith, organizing, and collective action.

We gather remembering that no history/herstory of freedom begins from scratch.

Today, we carry the memory of the women who came before us. African women and girls who were enslaved, displaced, silenced, and separated from their families; women who confronted colonialism, war, militarism and its continuities; women who sustained communities, preserved cultures, transmitted knowledge, and built networks of care under conditions of profound inequality.

We also carry the memory of women and girls who transformed suffering into organizing, faith into public action, and resistance into a collective project.

Therefore, as we gather in South Africa, we recognize the historical significance of the Pan-African tradition and of the gatherings that, since Manchester in 1945, have affirmed the need for the organization and collective action of African peoples and the African diaspora.

Our memory must not be seen merely as a remembrance of a painful past, but as a foundation for action in the present.

We remember the biblical story of Hagar, an African woman, enslaved, expelled, and left in the wilderness with her son. In the midst of vulnerability, Hagar utters one of the most profound affirmations in Scripture: "You are the God who sees me."

We receive this story not merely as an ancestral recovery, but as a solemn affirmation of our existence, inherent dignity, and political and spiritual agency over the paths we choose.

To be seen is to be fully recognized as legitimate women/woman of dignity, rights and of herstory/history.

To be seen is to demand that our memories, our pain, and our knowledge be taken seriously in the private and public sphere.

To be seen is to assume leadership in the crucial decisions that shape the present and future of our communities.

To be seen is to occupy a central place in spaces of leadership, in scientific, academic, and theological knowledge production, and also in the formulation of projects for social transformation.

Therefore, we affirm:

We do not want merely to be included in agendas that already exist. We want to participate in shaping the agendas that will guide the future of our peoples.

We recognize that the inequalities/inequities affecting African and Afro-descendant women and girls are deeply interconnected.

The climate crisis drives displacement, threatens territories, deepens food insecurity, and widens historical inequalities.

Forced migration is connected to war, poverty, climate change, economic exploitation, racism, and historical structures that continue to produce displacement.

Food insecurity is connected to economic inequality, the exploitation of territories, and structures produced by slavery and colonialism.

Across all these dimensions, women and girls occupy a central position. We are affected by inequalities and inequities, but we are also fundamental agents in protecting life,

rebuilding communities, producing food, preserving territories, organizing politically, and creating alternatives.

We will not accept our presence being recognized only after crises have already taken hold.

Gathered across generations, continents, religious traditions, and different experiences of the diaspora, we recognize that our diversity does not diminish our capacity to act collectively.

Our unity is born from our capacity to walk together despite our differences.

Therefore, we make six commitments:

1. Leadership and Political Participation of African and Diaspora Women and Girls

Ensure the effective participation of African and Afro-descendant women and girls in political, religious, economic, environmental, and multilateral decision-making spaces, with particular attention to strengthening intergenerational leadership.

2. Climate Justice and Confronting Environmental Racism

Expand the participation and decision-making power of Black women in the climate agenda, ensuring access to resources, recognizing territorial knowledge, and confronting the racial and gender inequalities produced by the climate crisis.

3. Dignity and Rights of Women and Girls Experiencing Migration and Forced Displacement

Advocate for policies that protect the dignity and rights of migrant and displaced women and girls and provide pathways toward reparative justice, recognizing the historical continuity between the forced diaspora created by slavery and contemporary forms of displacement.

4. Economic Justice, Poverty Elimination, and Food Security

Promote policies that address structural inequalities, expand women's access to land, resources, and economic opportunities, and recognize their central role in food production, care work, and women's health and wellness - mind, body, spirit.

5. Memory, Reparatory and Historical Justice

Preserve and strengthen the memory of African and Afro-descendant women, recognizing their contributions to struggles for freedom and justice and confronting the continuities of slavery, colonialism, and racism.

6. Strengthening Women's Networks and Collective Action

Build and sustain permanent networks among women across the African continent and the diaspora, promoting education, translation, exchange, solidarity, mobilization, and joint advocacy at national, regional, and multilateral levels.

We will carry these commitments to our communities, organizations, churches, and decision-making spaces.

We will carry our memory into spaces of power.

We will carry our experiences into spaces where policies are formulated.

We will carry our voices into the spaces where the future of our people is decided.

And we will remain connected to transform commitments into action.

Hagar entered the wilderness without knowing what path lay ahead.

But she was not invisible. She saw, and she was seen.

Today, we too gather before the wildernesses of our time: wildernesses produced by racism, inequality, the climate crisis, displacement, hunger, and historical erasure.

And we affirm: **we see one another.**

And because we see, we commit ourselves to act.

From Africa to the diaspora.

From generations to generations.

We move forward together.

South Africa, October 26, 2026.
