

Hon. Gertrude Mongella
17th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting
January 24, 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Honourable Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Sisters and brothers, from Africa and beyond,

Welcome to the 17th Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on gender mainstreaming in the African Union.

I am delighted to have the honour to join so many distinguished colleagues, friends, and my sisters in solidarity here today. We are a group of women with the aim of representing the voices of the women of Africa.

Our story began with the first Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting in Durban in 2002. The network was officially launched in 2006, and since its inception has grown into a powerful and dynamic network with 55 members from across Africa and internationally, representing issues across the board.

The African Union (AU) Summit is mainly composed of male voices. We are here to represent women's voices in this forum.

The GIMAC is an occasion to meet, share knowledge and experiences, and strategize on how to ensure that women's voices are heard within the AU. Past GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultations have focused on many critical issues and have made recommendations to the AU:

- Conflict situations, in all regions of Africa, such as the Horn of Africa, the Mano River Region, and the Great Lakes region.
- Women's social, economic, and political empowerment

However, we know that recommendations are not enough. We need to focus on monitoring and evaluating the progress made by the AU and Member States. The GIMAC contributes to this through an Evaluation of Member States' reports on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA).

In this report we point out weaknesses and short comings; nevertheless, we also encourage and recognize Member States which have demonstrated progress on gender equality through the African Gender Forum and Award (AGFA). The AGFA Selection Committee met yesterday to consider the 2011 recipient of the award.

Today, I have the pleasure to recognize the presence and support of our committed partners. Among others:

- The International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Mary Robinson Foundation-Climate Justice
- Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)
- Urgent Action Fund
- African Women's Development Fund
- Nobel Women's Initiative
- Governments of Norway, Sweden and Finland

To all, I say Thank You and Welcome.

We are proud to say that the GIMAC has attracted the attention of women beyond Africa's borders. H.E. Mary Robinson, former President of the Republic of Ireland, and H.E. Elisabeth Rehn, former Minister of Defence of Finland, have supported the growing women's movement in Africa, shared our values and participated in the activities of the GIMAC.

In the coming three days, the meeting will cover a number of issues, including,

- the elimination of violence against women
- climate change and its impact on people, particularly women
- gender aspects within the ever-changing economic situation in the world; for example food, fuel and the financial crisis

Despite the identified major themes of this consultative meeting, I am sure that participants will not lose sight of the fragile political conditions in Cote d'Ivoire, which is threatening the progress made so far on development and human rights.

The GIMAC meeting has always united us and offered a platform for concrete recommendations on gender mainstreaming to the AU Summits.

It is my hope that through our discussions, we will contribute to the agenda of the 16th AU Summit whose theme is Shared Values in the African Union. This summit is scheduled from 30th to 31st January 2011 here in Addis Ababa.

Thank you all for being here, and special thanks on behalf of FAS and the GIMAC to UNECA for hosting and helping to organize this meeting.