23rd Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union

Women in Agriculture and Food Security

Addis Ababa

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Introduction

The 22nd Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government took place on the 30th and 31st January 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The theme of the 22nd AU Summit was Agriculture and Food Security. Given this, the 23rd Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU, organised at the margins of the AU bi-annual Summits, was held on 23 and 24 January 2014, at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting focused on the 22nd AU Summit’s theme on Agriculture and Food Security, as well as Climate Change and Justice, Reproductive Health and Rights and Emerging Conflicts on the Continent. The main aim of the meeting was to produce recommendations to put forth to AU Heads of State and Government, civil society and the international community, on strengthening African women’s participation in the above areas. The 23rd Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting was co-organised by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and Ipas Alliance Africa. Roughly 200 participants from the civil society organisations that comprise the GIMAC network, as well as individuals and organisations interested in engendering the AU Summit theme, attended this meeting.

Opening Ceremony

Ms. Dibba-Wadda, Executive Director, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) chaired the opening ceremony and welcomed all participants and esteemed panellists to the 23rd Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) meeting. She equally welcomed key representatives of member states and partner organisations that support the GIMAC’s work, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa’s (UNECA) Africa Centre for Gender, the African Union Commission (AUC), and the GIMAC members from the continent and Diaspora.

Ms. Dibba-Wadda stated that the objective of the meeting was to reflect on empowering women in agriculture and food security, improving access for women to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, and ensuring accountability on these issues. "The GIMAC is the space in which to share our experiences, hopes, joys and pains, take stock of achievements and lessons learned, strategise for the future, and empower ourselves to build up the African women’s agenda. We welcome any new participants and look forward to receiving your views," said Ms. Dibba-Wadda.

Ambassador Dr. Eunice Brookman-Amissah, Vice President for Africa of Ipas Africa Alliance, presented the Welcome Statement, stating that the work of the GIMAC is of profound importance to all women and people in Africa. She thanked Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UNECA and his officials for their support to the bi-annual GIMAC Consultative Meetings and congratulated the AUC Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, for her leadership and focus on women’s issues. In this regard, Dr. Brookman-Amissah specifically congratulated H.E. Dlamini-Zuma for organising the first conference on maternal newborn and child health in 2013.

She stated that the meeting would review women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights, which have been woefully neglected in Africa; the tragedy of violence against women, which is aggravated by violent conflict; and the implications of climate change on agriculture and food security. Dr. Brookman-Amissah welcomed input from young women present in the room in order to make the GIMAC network more efficient and progressive in its campaign for all rights for African women. She invited all participants to engage fully with the stimulating agenda topics, and to come up with recommendations for implementation which would allow the GIMAC to ensure that it also walks the talk.
As AUC Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, was unable to attend due to multiple obligations, Commissioner H.E. Dr. Aisha Abdullahi of the AUC’s Department of Political Affairs (DPA) thus spoke on her behalf.

H.E. Dr. Abdullahi stated that the AUC has a clear approach to gender outlined in its frameworks, further elaborated upon in the Maputo Protocol and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). She stated that the Maputo Protocol complements the 1981 Charter on Human Rights promoting women’s rights and gender equality.

Through the SDGEA, she went on to say, member states committed to accelerate the implementation of gender-specific legal measures; ensure the full participation of women in peace processes; launch campaigns for the prevention of child soldiers, sex slavery, trafficking, and sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV); promote gender parity principles; and ensure active protection of all human rights for women. Agenda 2063’s long-term vision addresses disease burden, youth empowerment, and gender equality.

These form part of the AU’s mandate to advance continental unity and development, as was explained by H.E. Dr. Abdullahi. “There are many processes to internalise gender equality at the AUC, and having elected its first female Chairperson is a major accomplishment”, she said. Four of eight AUC commissioners are women, which is absolute parity. This is premised on the Union’s rules, but much effort is still needed – below the director level, the scale still tips in favour of men among its 1,000 staff members.

As Commissioner Dr. Abdullahi pointed out, 2014 is the AU’s Year of Agriculture and Food Security, also marking the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). On behalf of Chairperson Dr. Dlamini-Zuma she wished the participants fruitful deliberations throughout the meeting.

**Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UNECA,** began by describing the GIMAC as a message for the collective engagement of organisations to fight gender inequality and to ensure women’s empowerment. “The UNECA,” he said, “is convinced that the structural transformation of Africa can only be realised through the palpable contribution of the continent’s women.” Dr. Lopes emphasised the need for women to have equal access to productive resources at a time when low agricultural productivity in Africa is deplored by all.

He spoke of an existing initiative on land policy between the AUC, the UNECA, and the African Development Bank (AfDB) that assists the development of African countries by improving the use of land resources through appropriately administered policies. Dr Lopes emphasised that the empowerment of women in the agricultural sector would guarantee them their rights and social advantages, as well as radically improve agricultural production and food security. He cited that women’s access to productive resources by 20 to 30 percent yields a 2.5 to 4 percent growth in agricultural production nationally. He further stated that women involved in traditional agriculture are often ill-equipped to compete with men in industrial and service fields. Dr. Lopes suggested that women's contribution to agriculture should be recognised and valued, their constraints assessed, and gender responsive laws put in place. He stated that the UNECA’s African Centre for Gender looks forward to collaborating with other stakeholders on its new initiative to mainstream women into policy discussions, composed of three pillars: women’s economic empowerment, rights, and social protection and security. “The time has come for a dramatic change in beliefs,” he said, “and we have a right to ask African leaders to enlist in this change.”

**H.E. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitywah, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Namibia,** expressed her delight in seeing the women’s movement moving at the continental level, attributing this progress to the commitment and dedication of African women leaders, particularly those who started the Pan-African
Women’s Organisation (PAWO) in the 1960s. “If the women had not stood up in 1962 to establish PAWO, would the men have thought of establishing the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) in 1963?” she asked.

Her Excellency gave some examples of milestones in the movement, such as African women working hard to achieve gender parity at the AU, and fighting for the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security - UNSCR 1325. The Minister stated that the conference discussions were pertinent to the issues to be addressed at the AU Summit, and therefore Agenda 2063. She added that there is a need to follow up on the process to make sure that emerging views are considered. She stated that good policies and programmes exist at national and continental levels, but action remains a challenge. She encouraged all to correct past mistakes and work together to make a difference.

Introduction of Participants, Agenda and Expected Results

Ms. Joyce Mends-Cole, Head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Tanzania, facilitated this session.

Participants introduced themselves and the objectives of the conference were outlined as follows:

- To mobilise a diverse cross-section of women to dialogue on the issues of women in agriculture, women's reproductive health and rights and violence against women, and make recommendations to the 22nd AU Summit;
- To deliberate on how issues related to women's reproductive health and rights and violence against women affect their livelihoods and in turn affect their agricultural production and food security;
- To deliberate and make inputs on African women’s priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the AU’s Agenda 2063; and
- To showcase and mobilise commitment to the Empowering Women in Agriculture (EWA) initiative.
Session 1: Empowering Women in Agriculture and Food Security

This session was chaired by Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Coordinator of the African Centre for Gender at the UNECA.

Ms. Rhoda Tumusiime, Commissioner of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, AU, made a presentation on empowering women in agriculture and food security in Africa. She stated that although some results have been achieved, there is a need to emphasise broad-based economic growth across Africa by targeting women and youth. According to her, delivering results in the following areas will lead to transformation and inclusivity at the country and grassroots levels:

- Improving access to productive resources
- Reducing post-harvest losses and their impacts
- Market growth
- Access to financing opportunities
- Applied science education
- Innovation, entrepreneurship and accountability

Commissioner Tumusiime stated that, during 2014, the AU would reflect on the progress made by the CAADP and would identify concrete ways to utilise the full capacity of Africa’s population to build resilient households and dynamic and robust communities. She underscored the priority in 2014 to mainstream overlooked factors like rural youth and women, the link between food, nutrition health and innovation, and investment on agriculture-related value chains.

She highlighted the fact that, though nations have increased their capital requirements, in order to strengthen Africa’s commercial banks, women’s access to finance remains a challenge. Commissioner Tumusiime therefore said that renewed focus on credit and saving organisations is needed to facilitate women's access to credit. She called for the empowerment of women as direct landowners as individuals or in groups. Commissioner Tumusiime concluded with a recommendation to delve into the tremendous knowledge available from pilot projects to identify portfolios that can be scaled up continentally, nationally, and regionally. “The African Women Agricultural Research Awards stand out as successful in this aspect. The AUC is committed to Africa’s growth and to including the continent’s women in that growth,” said the Commissioner.

Senior Agronomist at the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr. Harouna Dosso, outlined the work of the Bank, in agriculture, done in conjunction with other development institutions. He explained that all African developmental issues are discussed through the tripartite secretariat of the UNECA, AU and AfDB, and that the AfDB provides financial support to programmes for the continent’s development. He pointed out the sad truth that few women work in the formal agriculture sector, allowing men to take the lead instead.

Dr. Dosso reported that a stand-alone gender strategy has just been approved by the Bank board, and that, in order to safeguard the role of women in all fields, the Bank has a gender mainstreaming requirement for all projects selected for financing. He emphasised that for agriculture in particular, at least 30 percent of the intended beneficiaries are required to be women or else the project will not be approved by the Bank for funding. Dr. Dosso stated that the G8 Summit of 2009 gave the AfDB a grant for the Agriculture Fast-Track Fund, to support the development of agribusinesses – especially by women – from six pilot countries on the continent.

The following presentation by Dr. Fatima Denton, Coordinator of the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), UNECA, put agriculture at the centre of African economies. She identified its potential as being huge, despite the fact that agriculture is an underperforming sector in many countries. Dr. Denton said
that agriculture is important in terms of future industrialisation, and thereby transformation, as well as providing opportunities to help small-holder farmers, thereby reducing poverty. Three major challenges observed by Dr. Denton are:

- feeding the poorest two billion people in the world;
- combating climate change; and
- ensuring that agricultural potential is not locked by the negative impact of climate change.

Agriculture is expected to play a key role in Africa’s transformation, but to do so; Africans must take advantage of technological leaps. Dr. Denton showed that agriculture accounts for 32 percent of Africa’s GDP, 65 percent of the population’s employment, and 40 percent of export earnings. She stressed that most agriculture is rain-fed and highly vulnerable to climate change, which also affects the water and energy sectors on which women rely.

Dr. Denton therefore called for an essential response to climatic variation. She proposed investing in science, technology and modelling studies to understand how climate change affects women’s activities, and crop and staple food yields. She also called for more efforts to understand the role women will play in Africa’s green economy.

As stated by Dr. Denton, women farmers are generally knowledgeable in seed selection, vegetative propagation, and plant and animal reproduction. In addition, she mentioned that women play additional roles in the context of agriculture and climate change by way of soil and water conservation, reforestation, and crop domestication. Despite this, she highlighted the existence of gender-based barriers which not only render women vulnerable to food insecurity, but also hinder agricultural productivity. She reported that statics showed that given access to the same resources as men, women’s agricultural yields could increase by more than 20 percent, and reduce the numbers of malnourished people by 12 to 17 percent. Dr. Denton underlined notable institutional deficits in areas such as credit, insurance, and dissemination of weather predictions to rural areas. She underscored that investment is needed in irrigation and enhanced extension services, and soft and hard infrastructure. Gathering sex-disaggregated data on access to land, land tenure security, finance, extension services, and agricultural tools were additional recommendations she put forth for a gender-responsive policy design.

Ms. Kafui Kuwonu, Regional Programme Coordinator of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), echoed Dr. Denton’s presentation as she described women as the backbone of African agriculture, feeding 70 percent of the population despite poor access to productive resources such as land, inputs, credit and technology. She listed added constraints in the form of infertile soils, irregular rains, and inadequate land on which to cultivate other crops during the off season. She mentioned that access to information on programmes and organisations supporting women’s activities is also limited.

Ms. Kuwonu reported that WiLDAF has worked with women’s groups in West Africa since 2009 to contribute towards food production, and to help women to benefit fully from their socioeconomic rights. She said that as an organisation linking law to development, one of the goals of WiLDAF is to show women their importance to their communities and to involve the local authorities in its initiatives. In addition to assisting women to get access to resources, it influences agricultural policies and promotes education and research to bring about attitudinal change for sustainable empowerment.

Ms. Kuwonu called attention to the commitment made by African Heads of State ten years ago to put ten percent of resources for agricultural funding to contribute to the continent’s six percent growth rate. She indicated that to date; only eight countries have abided by that commitment. She requested recognition of the role women have played in the partial success of this endeavour. Ms. Kuwonu reported that WiLDAF is currently organising civil society organisations (CSOs) for a new initiative on agricultural financing,
taking into account women’s issues and seeking to remove their obstacles. The "GROW" Campaign, launched in partnership with OXFAM was highlighted as accompanying WiLDAF’s initiatives.

In her presentation entitled “Dialogue with Civil Society: A Forward-Looking Discussion on the Post-2015 Agenda” Ms. Harriette Williams-Bright, Advocacy Director at FAS, introduced the Empowering Women in Agriculture (EWA) initiative, launched in 2012 under the stewardship of H.E. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia. Ms Williams-Bright stated that EWA progress indicators had been created and a mapping study on the importance of agriculture to women was underway. She reported that during the 20th AU Summit in January 2013, Decision 473 was taken pledging support to the role of women in agriculture. She further explained that during the Mo Ibrahim Governance Week of November 2013, discussions were held regarding young women’s integration into EWA as well as how to move forward on the AU Decision 473. Ms. Williams-Bright announced that there would be a joint initiative on 29 January 2014, organised by the GIMAC, EWA and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) on women’s access to land, creating an inventory of access, sensitising decision-makers on the issue, and obtaining a legally-binding declaration.

**DISCUSSION**

- Participants pointed out the paradox of much humanitarian aid currently being imported when Africa has the capacity to produce food for its entire population.
- In the same vein, the challenges facing small-holder farmers were outlined as follows:
  - the quality of their products remains low and deters consumers;
  - storage facilities for perishable goods are lacking;
  - farmers may not know how to use new equipment provided for them; and
  - that the lack of start-up capital discourages youth.
- The Agriculture Fast-Track Fund was given as an example of a project that attempts to respond to these challenges. The Fund targets young entrepreneurs who do not know how to write a proposal or a business plan, and assists them throughout the process. Financing is also available through climate change organisations, like the Adaptation Fund and the Green Planet Fund. It was suggested for organisations working on the ground to help farmers put together strong proposals for bankable projects to cement all these efforts.
- A recommendation was made to put food security in the context of other related issues including:
  - innovation in waste management, adaptation to climate change, and development of infrastructure; and
  - recognising the quality of women’s reproductive health as a big player in their agricultural productivity.
- Focusing on empowering women specifically, the AfDB’s Special Envoy for Gender was said to be poised to influence discussions in favour of the women’s agenda, but the remaining obstacles were pointed out. For example, the Bank, within the framework of the Agriculture Fast-Track Fund,
requires only 30 percent of its projects’ beneficiaries to be women, which is too low in light of the overall push for gender equality.

- Other similar recommendations made include the need for farmer-friendly banks that take into account the vulnerability of small-holder farmers to loss and damage, and a grant system for CSOs to access loans for women farmers. The AfDB recently developed a framework for its engagement with CSOs, which supports such initiatives by outlining their feasibility.
- Efforts to make the continent self-sufficient in terms of food production were highlighted. For example, organisations working in food security attempt to buy from surplus markets in other African countries. The World Food Programme (WFP) equally offers vouchers as well as cash to give women choices in how and where to buy food.
- A point was raised about the challenge of co-ordinating the activities of the proliferation of institutions working on women’s issues. Participants urged organisations to understand their comparative advantages and increase coordination. The UNECA, AU and AfDB set the pace for best practices as they coordinate their respective activities, as well as with those of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for regional and continental strategies.
- Documenting best practices and indigenous knowledge was advised to enhance efficacy of all efforts. In support, FAS and EWA are in the process of setting up a database of agricultural best practices from across the continent.

Session 2: Delivering for the Women of Africa – Improving Access to Neglected Reproductive Health Services

Ms. Dinah Musindarwezo, Executive Director of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) chaired this session.

“I grew up in the town of Nambale in eastern Kenya. After sitting for my O-Level exams, I joined a community-based organisation, through which I am able to be here today to tell you how I have witnessed the consequences of unsafe abortion.

Sarah, my 17-year-old classmate, was an orphan who was cared for by her pastor. Eventually, he got her pregnant and left her. The drugs she took to terminate the pregnancy almost killed her. Luckily, she was found and taken to a health professional for treatment, but she missed out on her education.

Christina became pregnant and dropped out of school to get married at 14. She left her abusive husband and two children to look for work in Mombasa, but she got pregnant again at 19. A 500g tablet of salt terminated her pregnancy, but made her bleed non-stop. When she came to Nambale, we managed to get her medical care.

Another girl from my town lost her life through unsafe abortion, but no one was willing to talk about the cause of her death. Her mother was involved in the cover-up.

Women must take a leading role to address this pressing issue, with men involved at all stages of sexual and reproductive health. Boys and girls should be taught to respect each others’ bodies from an early age. Rural women especially need reaching out to. Only through unity can we put an end to the tragedy of unsafe abortion.”

~ Ms. Maureen Oruma, Nambale New Hope Community Based Organisation
Amb. Dr. Eunice Brookman-Amissah delivered a presentation on the topic of “Addressing Neglected Reproductive Health Challenges: Overview of Unsafe Abortion”. She cited that almost 300,000 maternal mortality deaths occur globally every year, with Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia contributing to 90 percent of these deaths, most of which are preventable. She mentioned that the lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy- and childbirth-related problems in developing countries is 1/22 versus 1/7000 in developed countries. In this context, she highlighted that unsafe abortions account for approximately 40 percent of maternal mortality rates, while increasing access to SRHR services could reduce the number by 40 percent.

She defined unsafe abortion as a procedure for terminating unplanned and unwanted pregnancy performed by individuals without the necessary skills, or in an environment that does not conform to the minimum medical standards. When performed in the right environment, she stated, abortion is one of the safest medical procedures. Dr. Brookman-Amissah reported that women in all parts of the world, of all ages and social standing, have been performing abortions since ancient times. During her presentation, Dr. Brookman-Amissah clarified that:

- Abortion is not a foreign agenda for Africa.
- The safety of the abortion is influenced by geographic location, age, and socioeconomic status.
- Making abortion illegal does not prevent women from having it.
- Abortion rates are similar around the world, but the rates of unsafe abortion are much higher in Africa, Latin America and Asia.
- Of the 22 million unsafe abortions performed globally in 2008, 6.2 million were in Africa.
- Of the 47,000 deaths that occurred globally from unsafe abortion, 29,000 were in Africa.
- Africa has 10 percent of the world’s population and 48 percent of its maternal deaths.
- Africa spends approximately 168 million USD treating unsafe abortion, whose consequences include death, short- and long-term illness and injury, infertility, and negative impact on families.

She further stated that abortion should be safe and available to the full extent of the law, as outlined in ICPD and Beijing +20 statements. African leaders have demonstrated the political will to promote and protect reproductive health, but the various declarations remain to be implemented. Amb. Dr. Brookman-Amissah gave Ethiopia as a good example of legal reform and service provision to increase access to safe abortion. The role of advocates on the issue, as defined by Amb. Dr. Brookman-Amissah, encompasses building an understanding of abortion as an issue of health, social justice and human rights, and breaking the taboo surrounding it. She recommended the inclusion of abortion in all gender equality agendas and holding governments accountable to translating their agreements into reality. The Post-2015 Development Agenda offers such an opportunity to advocate for a comprehensive SRHR agenda.

A complementary presentation by Ms. Suzanne Majani, Policy Advisor at Ipas Africa Alliance, was entitled “Adolescents and Unsafe Abortion in Africa”. Ms. Majani’s presentation informed participants that young women and adolescents in Africa have a 1/5 chance of maternal mortality, with 60 percent of these being women below 25 years, and 25 percent being between 15 to 19 years. The risk for girls below age 15 is five times higher than the average. Gender roles and traditional norms were the main factors put forth by Ms. Majani for women to seek unsafe abortions, as well as forced sex, unsupportive youth community leaders, limited sex education, parental attitudes about premarital sex, and limited data on the phenomenon. She highlighted the denial of adolescents having sex when the statistics on unsafe abortion indicate that this is an obvious occurrence.

She mentioned restrictive abortion laws as one of the barriers to safe abortion. Poor knowledge among young women of laws and services, lack of youth friendly services (like inaccessible location or hours), high cost of services, stigma or judgement, and lack of confidentiality are additional hurdles. Ms. Majani
outlined Ipsa’s three approaches to this problem: community programmes, policy and law reform, and targeting health systems and providers. The way forward encapsulates educating girls on family planning, but contingency plans suggested by her in the case of unwanted pregnancy include:

- Enhancing the ability and rights of women, including young women, to obtain safe SRHR services, including abortion;
- Health systems must deliver quality abortion care;
- Knowledge, skills and social support;
- Supportive policy and legislative rights; and
- Research on how to increase young women’s access to safe abortion.

Commissioner Cristina Hunguana of the Mozambique Human Rights Commission tackled the topic of “Implementing Abortion Laws in Africa”. Commissioner Hunguana began by emphasising the need to implement abortion laws for two reasons: health-wise, to reduce recourse to unsafe abortion and thereby minimise maternal mortality; and to protect various human rights. She detailed the six types of abortion laws that exist:

1. Most restrictive – only permitted to save the woman’s life or prohibited altogether
2. Physical health grounds – permitted to protect the woman’s life and physical health
3. Mental health grounds – permitted to protect the woman’s life, physical and mental health (whose definition varies)
4. Socioeconomic grounds – age, income level, marital status, and number and well-being of existing children taken into account
5. Moral medical grounds – cases of rape, incest or foetal impairment
6. Without restriction – it is the woman’s choice

Commissioner Hunguana informed the meeting that no country in Africa has an absolute ban on abortion and that all countries allow abortion to save the life of the pregnant woman, of which 28 allow it for physical and mental health reasons, 14 for foetal impairment, one for socioeconomic grounds (Zambia), and three without restriction (South Africa, Tunisia and Cape Verde).

In the Commissioner’s opinion, four African countries stand out as examples of good abortion law implementation: Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Zambia. On these countries, she reported that:

- Ghana’s abortion law enacted in 1985 is one of the most progressive in Africa.
- Zambia’s 1972 law takes into account the potential negative impact of the pregnancy on any of the woman’s existing children, and the woman’s environment and age.
- The 1996 South African Termination of Pregnancy Act allows abortion within 12 weeks without justification and within 24 weeks in certain circumstances.

She pointed out that, with several African countries having good abortion laws, restrictive laws are clearly not the only reason why women seek unsafe abortion.

Commissioner Hunguana explained that laws may be almost identical but their interpretation varies greatly. For example, international and regional consensus documents and human rights treaties, UN treaty monitoring bodies’ general recommendations, and constitutional and foreign law are all sources that aid interpretation of abortion law. Commissioner Hunguana mentioned that other sources are the Maputo Protocol and the Rex vs Bourne case. She reported that the Maputo Protocol has been ratified by 36 countries with some reservations on Article 14(2)(C) authorising medical abortion, and that Rex vs Bourne (which is applicable to Commonwealth nations) refers to the case of a 14-year-old girl who was raped. In this case, the judge interpreted the life exception broadly to include if the “consequence of the continuation of the pregnancy will be to make the woman a physical or mental wreck”
The Commissioner concluded by highlighting the trend towards less restrictive laws in Africa through legal reforms and litigation which influences this. She urged African governments to change their laws to conform to the Maputo Protocol and Plan of Action, CEDAW, and ICPD. All African nations have grounds to provide safe abortion but laws must be interpreted broadly to encompass human rights. National standards that are evidence-based and periodically upgraded should guide the provision of safe abortion, she said.

DISCUSSION

- Young women were counselled to play a role in preventing unwanted pregnancies by practicing safe sex, while recognising that they often lack information on how to do so.
- Panellists informed the meeting that contraceptive use in Africa is at about 28 percent, meaning that many women are getting pregnant without wanting to.
- Emergency contraception was mentioned as a lesser known option that can prevent abortions.
- Ipas has found that it is particularly difficult to reach women with disabilities because of the stigma they face.
- Another challenge is the lack of sufficient knowledge on SRHR laws among the general public. This makes it difficult for women and girls to claim their rights. Engaging people with the capacity to interpret these laws such as judges and lawyers, as well as health providers who may not know the parameters of their countries’ abortion laws, was suggested as a way forward.
- Participants stated that women’s groups and CSOs have a responsibility to involve other stakeholders and share knowledge on SRHR laws. Ipas, for example, works with traditional leaders to create awareness within communities. Leaders assist with everything from project proposals to taking girls to the nearest service points for safe abortion.
- A Solidarity for African Women’s Rights (SOAWR) representative stated that it is currently working on a multi-sector training to implement the Maputo Protocol. Rather than focusing on the barriers to women accessing the full range of SRHR, she proposed that one looks rather at existing opportunities like those afforded by the Maputo Protocol.
The session’s panellists made it clear that a safe and legal abortion requires the consent of the woman, even if the pregnancy was imposed upon her in some way. An abortion performed against the woman’s willingness is considered a crime.

Session 3: Accountability for Promoting and Protecting women’s Reproductive Health in Africa

This session was chaired by Mme. Soyata Maiga, Special Rapporteur of Women’s Rights in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR).

I work as a Peer Educator in the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia. As a teenager, I participated in family planning and sex education programmes, leading me to understand the danger of unsafe abortion. I have also witnessed the power of safe abortion in giving young girls their lives back.

A 16-year-old girl I met was raped by her teacher and could not talk to anyone about it. There was not much I could do, not knowing that the law allows safe abortion in Ethiopia. I advised her not to go to the “backdoor” or traditional doctors, but six days later, I heard she overdosed trying to terminate the pregnancy.

Another girl got pregnant after being raped by her father. She received no support from her mother or the society, so she continued the pregnancy and led a life of shame, punished for a crime she did not commit.

As a nation, I am proud to say that Ethiopia learned from such cases and amended the laws. I have since been able to advise several young women on safe abortion without endangering their lives or health. The same organisations that were supposed to support and nurture young women often times perpetuated violence against them. We have the responsibility to protect these girls, not victimise them. Let us make our laws unrestrictive, abortion safe, and save the lives of many young girls.

~ Ms. Alem Tesfaye, Youth Volunteer, Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia

“The 2010 Kenyan Constitution much improved abortion law, but abortion stigma remains huge,” stated Ms. Monica Oguttu, Executive Director of Kisumu Medical and Education Trust, in her talk on “Working to Eliminate Stigma on Abortion: the Kenya Experience”. Article 26 of the Kenyan Constitution states that “abortion is not permitted unless the opinion of a trained health professional is that there is need for emergency treatment or the life or health of the mother is in danger or if permitted by any other written law”. In some cases in Kenya, she said, abortion remains more stigmatized than HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Oguttu defined abortion stigma as “a negative attribute ascribed to women who seek to terminate a pregnancy or suffer abortion complications, marking them as inferior to the ideals of womanhood”. She stated that repeated miscarriage is also stigmatised, on the belief that the woman’s actions caused the pregnancy to fail. The stigma occurs at many levels: individual – community – organisational (ex. Ipas seen as an abortion institution and stigmatised up to the donor level) – structural – and framing discourses. Its consequences are secrecy, denial or guilt of the woman, delay in seeking medical help, or injury and death as a result of resorting to unsafe means.
Ms Oguttu emphasised that access to safe abortion services requires good policies, an enabling environment, and community involvement. She described a community strategy which uses the “Six Rights” approach incorporating the right message, time, target, friends/peers, community mobilisers, and channels of communication. She said that using lessons learned from the fight against HIV/AIDS, the organisation develops culturally appropriate messages, encompasses other reproductive health issues like SGBV, and uses case studies to increase awareness. “Communities have the power to decide that women’s lives are worth saving”, emphasised Ms. Oguttu, adding that more funding is needed for community advocacy against abortion stigma, and everyone has a role to play.

“The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Strengthening Government Accountability” was reviewed by Commissioner Winfred Lichuma, Chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in Kenya.

Commissioner Lichuma explained that the role of national human rights institutions is to ensure that the state fully complies with the human rights standards provided for by its national, regional and international agreements. She clarified that the NHRI in Kenya is an independent institution that submits annual reports to Parliament on the accountability of both state and non-state actors through mechanisms such as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR). The KNCHR can execute its mandate on its own initiative or upon a complaint made by any person or group.

She illustrated with details on a KNCHR inquiry launched in response to an allegation, which found that women’s SRHR were violated in Kenya’s health facilities, especially gravely in the cases of marginalised and vulnerable groups. It also found that people lacked information on SRHR, the health sector was underfunded, and the government did not provide remedies for the violations discovered.

Based on its findings, the Commission put forth a number of recommendations:

- The Ministry of Health (MoH) and relevant stakeholders to develop standards and guidelines on safe abortion
- All health regulatory bodies to align their codes of practice and ethics on termination of pregnancy with the Constitution
- The government to make available safe abortion at all health facilities at national and county levels
- Abortion to be made affordable to all by integrating the service into the broader health financing
- Kenya to deposit its ratification of the Maputo Protocol with the AU secretariat and to consider removing the reservation placed on Article 14[2][C]
- The MoH and other stakeholders to undertake civic education that allows for safe termination of pregnancy
- The MoH to ensure provisions of the Constitution are adopted in the curriculum of health training institutions
- Ministries responsible for internal security and constitutional affairs to ensure they prevent wrongful arrests and harassment of abortion providers by the Kenyan police

The impact of the inquiry, as stated by the Commissioner, has been for the government to declare free maternal health care services for all deliveries, set aside more money for recruitment of nurses, and decentralise health care services to the local level. She reported that progress is being made on all recommendations and that the NHRI will follow up to ensure that all are implemented fully.

Ms. Naisola Likimani, Senior Policy Advisor at Ipas Africa Alliance briefed the conference on existing “African Union Initiatives to Reduce Unsafe Abortion”. Africa’s regional policy framework is composed of the Abuja Declaration (2001); the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); the Continental Policy Framework on SRHR (2005); the Maputo Plan of Action (2006); the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa CARMMA (2009); and the Kampala Summit.
The Maputo Protocol is the only piece of legislation providing for safe abortion, while CARMMA tracks progress made in reducing rates of unsafe abortion.

Ms. Likimani declared that the CARMMA released a publication in March 2013 on good practices on the continent in Maternal and Newborn Child Health (MNCH) interventions. A compendium of African abortion laws by the AU and Ipas followed in December 2013, in response to the realisation that there is gross ignorance of the issue at all levels. The publication was adopted by the AUC’s Department of Social Affairs for printing in the four African official languages to aid with the interpretation and implementation of existing abortion laws.

As stated by Ms. Likimani, a task force has been set up to look at MNCH trends and deliver recommendations to Heads of State. The 2012 and 2013 reports detail the problem of unsafe abortion and the need to review restrictive laws and address stigma. She reported that the first International Conference on MNCH in Africa was held in August 2013 in South Africa, with high-level participation and commitment by governments and the UN through a Plan of Action. Moreover, participating governments committed to align their laws on SRHR to the Maputo Protocol and to review implementation every two years. She explained that the ACHPR holds states accountable for implementing the Charter and the Protocol on Women’s Rights, and that a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa questions governments on women’s SRHR and sensitises ministers of gender and health. She further reported that CSOs present alternative and shadow reports to the ACHPR. Malawi is set to be first to report on implementation of the Protocol in May 2014.

Ms. Likimani claimed that continued advocacy from civil society has kept women’s SRHR as a priority at the regional level, and that pushing for implementation of existing frameworks – rather than creating new ones – is the way forward. She urged governments to adopt the Maputo Protocol without reservation and demystify abortion. Regional documents that often do not trickle down to the national level must be disseminated widely, she suggested.

DISCUSSION

- The fact that it is impossible to achieve the MDGs with current rates of unsafe abortion was highlighted. There is a strong push for comprehensive and integrated SRHR encompassing comprehensive sexual education, counselling, contraceptives, maternity care, safe abortion and post-abortion care, and prevention and treatment of HIV and STIs. Integrating services right at the start was proposed as enhancing effectiveness. For example, family counselling, HIV testing, and abortion should be available in the same facility.
- Participants were encouraged by the declaration that it is possible to get rid of abortion stigma through the policies countries adopt, how they implement them, and the services that are provided. The various proposals on how to do so include utilising existing activities and bodies to spread awareness on abortion, coalition building such as with networks of women living with HIV, and involving men and boys at all stages.
- Despite progress with abortion laws, participants acknowledged that there is a real concern over the high rate of teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions in Kenya. Religious leaders have now become anticontraception and family planning ads are banned from television, the meeting was informed. KMET and other organisations are working to overcome these hurdles through programmes like “Closing the Gap”, which works with the Kenyan Ministry of Health and other partners to make services youth-friendly.
**Film Screening of GIMAC 10 Year Anniversary Celebration**

The film was presented by **Mr. Ibrahim Ceesay, Executive Director of the African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC)**. It explained the role of the GIMAC as a platform for not only networking but tracking the implementation of the SDGEA. It also contained various highlights of past GIMAC events and comments from GIMAC members and participants over the years. Esteemed partners from the African Leadership Forum, FAWE, FAS, FEMNET, ABANTU, the YWCA, the EBWA, the PAC and the AUC among many others provided insight into the GIMAC’s role and achievements over the last 10 years. Throughout the film, women from various organisations highlighted the role of the platform in supporting grassroots women, young women and women in conflict to network, unify as one voice, and to advocate for their views at a continental level. The added value of this united front is in influencing leadership at the African Union to mainstream gender in all decision making processes. In the words of H.E. Mary Robinson in the film, the GIMAC at 10 years was recognised as “personifying and illustrating women’s leadership.”

**Session 4: Women’s Priorities for the Africa Common Position (ACP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

This session was chaired by **Ms. Harriette Williams Bright, Advocacy Director at FAS.**

“**I am 19 years old and an orphan. I have recently completed secondary school and committed to go to college. I was not brought on this earth to be invisible, denied, or to belong to someone else. I belong to me, I have a voice, and I will use it. I am happy to represent African girls who could not be here today.**

We young African women have dreams, but we face barriers to achieving our goals. We have limited access to land and economic opportunities, limiting what we can achieve, especially in rural areas. We see the challenges of age-mates who drop out of school because of unwanted pregnancy. To maximise our potential, we need mentors and leaders who understand our needs and fight for gender equality.

Girls who are talented need opportunities to exercise their skills. We recommend the implementation of the Girls’ Declaration that puts girls at the forefront of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This is the moment when the world sees that African girls are looking for opportunities instead of barriers. We are eager to show the world what we can do.”

~**Ms. Pascaline Niyigena, Youth Trustee, Girl Hub Rwanda**

**Ms. Lucrece Falolou, Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Benin** campaigned for the achievement of women’s empowerment through four areas: education, health, political rights, and economic empowerment. She believes that African leaders have created a favourable environment for women’s empowerment, but they must implement policies, involve young women in agriculture, and take climate change into account. Ms. Falolou emphasised that leaders should take ensure decent employment for women, as well as enhance the capacity of women in financial management and through microfinance. Related to this, she mentioned that education for all is critical, especially at the tertiary level, as a way for women to think for themselves.

"**The development agenda should be taught in schools, with SRHR at its heart, to involve girls in the process as well as encouraging the adoption of ICT in schools and youth centres,**” said Ms. Falolou. She underscored that quality health services must be available to all women incorporating the care of SGBV survivors. She expressed the wish of young women to see an Africa where peace and justice are consolidated on the premise of the development agenda. Women and girls should know and enjoy their
rights without discrimination or violence. All of Africa’s population should take active part in the development of the continent, she concluded.

Following this, “Women’s Priorities for the ACP on the Post-2015 Development Agenda” were put forward by Ms. Yvette Kathurima, Advocacy Officer at FEMNET. She began by stating that the MDGs focused heavily on quantity at the expense of quality. Given this, avoiding regression and discrimination to develop an inclusive framework based on human rights is key for the Post-2015 Development agenda.

Ms. Kathurima commended Africa’s remarkable progress in some areas of the MDGs, but pointed out that significant gaps remain. These are in the form of the absence of SGBV targets and indicators; insufficient discussion on women’s SRHR and on their ownership of property and protection of labour; as well as the absence of a peace and security framework. She stated that no country in Africa has achieved gender equality and that there are backlashes against non-discrimination, and development is about power, which is ultimately about politics.

She described a two-pronged approach composed of gender mainstreaming into all areas of the Post-2015 Agenda, as well as a stand-alone goal on gender. Ms. Kathurima stated that the transformative goal on gender involves ending all forms of SGBV and eliminating all barriers to SRHR. She further demanded access to and control over ownership of productive resources, recognition, redistribution and remuneration for unpaid care work, and 50 percent representation in decision making.

She listed several venues within which African women can engage with regard to gender equality and development:

- Open Working Groups (OWG) Women Major Groups
- Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- Commission on Population and Development (CPD)
- Missions in New York

Ms. Kathurima reported that within the regional context, there is the bi-annual AU Summit that affords the opportunity to work with country and organisational representatives in Addis Ababa. She suggested working with the African Heads of State High-Level Committee on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, chaired by President Sirleaf and composed of committee members who are presidents of nine African countries. The AU’s Africa 2063 with its focus on Africa’s development and technological transformation was also touched upon by Ms. Kathurima.

The related and urgent issue of the HIV/AIDS epidemic – which has affected Africa worse than any other region – was elaborated upon by Ms. Rosemary Museminali, UNAIDS Representative to AU and UNECA. “Africa is home to 25 million of the 35 million people living with HIV globally, but Africa makes up only 11 percent of the global population,” she said. Ms Museminali reported that in 2012, 1.6 million people were newly infected with HIV, and 1.2 million died of AIDS-related illnesses on the continent. She emphasised that AIDS has eroded health and development gains, placing burdens on health and social services, as well as threatening all other sectors. "Currently, Africa has 14 conflict and post-conflict countries, where there is an increase in the risk of SGBV, which is sometimes used as a weapon of war”, explained Ms. Museminali. She recommends that Africa put HIV/AIDS on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, reflecting the continent’s priorities as stated in the Abuja Declaration to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria by 2030. AIDS is also a priority on the gender equality agenda.

Ms. Museminali went on to suggest that responses reflect the specific needs of women and girls in the context of HIV, tailor a strategy that emphasises those at greatest risk (young women), and create links across all sectors and stakeholders.
DISCUSSION

- Participants urged the Post-2015 discussions to move forward from simply demanding girls’ enrolment in schools to focus on the quality of education. They recommended quality education to be combined with career guidance and professional skills training to assist girls with their long-term visions, and for systems to be put in place for out-of-school women to access learning opportunities.

- Youth entrepreneurship was mentioned as a powerful tool to alleviate poverty and achieve some of the MDGs, including gender equality. The African Youth Alliance was launched by the UN Special Envoy for Youth in September 2013, and its first membership meeting in February 2014 is open to all those who are interested. Youth advocates were encouraged to forth suggestions for how GIMAC can target the specific needs of young women and incorporate them into the development agenda.

- Panellists gave background on the concept of sustainable development goals that were formed at the Rio +20 conference and subsequently adopted by other development processes. To that effect, discussions are taking place between the AU and UNDP to align Agenda 2063 with the Post-2015 Agenda. Panellists also advocated for a feminist perspective to frame global phenomena and conversations, while recognising that lack of consensus on gender issues hampers progress in certain arenas. A suggestion was made for interventions at the regional level to happen via H.E. President Sirleaf as Chair of the High-Level Committee, Uganda as the president of the general assembly for Post-2015 discussions, and Kenya which is co-chairing the OWG.

- The website of Women Major Groups helps other organisations keep track of the conversation on a global level. FEMNET appealed for suggestions from other groups and individuals via Twitter or Facebook. Pan-Africanism was stated as no longer being an ideology but a necessity, because solidarity is key to achieving Agenda 2063.

- Advocates for gender equality were implored to balance the push to modernise the continent with the retention of valuable African traditions. Pan-Africanism, participants said, is a strength, and values and virtues of Africa should not be forgotten in the fight for development.

Session 5: Emerging Conflicts on the African Continent

This session was chaired by Ms. Letty Chiwara, UN Women Representative.

Dr. Amani Asfour, ECOSOCC Member and President of the Egyptian Business Women Association, opened the session by providing a background to the June 2013 Egyptian revolution. In Egypt, the previous government gained power in the name of religion and democracy, she stated, by giving food to the people, rallying in mosques and promising equality for all Egyptians. Shortly after being elected, however, they began preventing women from going to school and encouraged girls to get married at nine years old. “Women in rural areas who were not veiled in public were beaten or had their hair cut, and the government wanted to abolish the law against female genital mutilation (FGM),” Dr. Asfour reported. She said that in June 2013, 33 million people revolted against the terrorist regime and installed a progressive government committed to the equality of its citizens. She concluded by announcing that the new Egyptian Constitution strongly favours gender equality.

In her presentation, Ms. Woré Ndiaye Kandji, Assistant Programme Officer at FAS, illustrated the journey taken in “Implementing UNSCR 1325 in the Great Lakes Region”. She stated that UNSCR 1325 was signed in October 2000 with three elements: the protection of women and girls during conflict, involving them in conflict prevention, and encouraging participation in peace processes. It was launched in 2007 in conjunction with partnering institutions in each of the countries. FAS’ project in the Great Lakes region contributes to an integrated approach of the Resolution’s Regional Action Plan (RAP).
Ms. Kandji reported on the National Action Plans (NAPs) that were developed, and trainings on indicators and budgeting conducted in 2010. Trainings on project management for representatives of the regional steering committees followed in 2011. Additional focus was laid on enhancing the capacity of relevant stakeholders in understanding and implementing Resolution 1325. In addition she reported that the participation pillar of the Resolution was launched in 2011 in Burundi for women parliamentarians, CSOs, and government representatives. The protection pillar for women’s organisations and authorities was established in 2012 in Eastern DRC. A review of the RAP was conducted the same year by an independent expert.

Ms. Kandji narrated that a Regional Conference on Women, Peace, Security and Development was held in July 2013 in Burundi, in collaboration with the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The Conference established a common initiative for a peace and security framework, created a regional steering committee, and advocated for implementation to be taken to regional and international high-level fora.

Ms. Kandji highlighted the existence of another project FAS is carrying out in the area to help the women in the town of Rutshuru with agricultural initiatives. A plant was built to preserve and package fruits that the women cultivate. The project’s integrated approach involves targeting maternal health, sustainability through agriculture, and sustained economic stability. She expressed her hope for the organisation to begin providing de-traumatisation support for women survivors of conflict in the near future.

Ms. Betty Ogwaro, a Civil Society Representative from South Sudan, prefaced her talk by listing a number of accumulated factors that have sparked the current conflict in the country. She expanded upon the problems with the constitution, power sharing, engagement of different groups – including women – and interest in managing oil that have caused the conflict. Ms. Ogwaro explained that shooting broke out in army barracks and spread around Juba following a meeting on 14 December, in which the Vice President opposed the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement’s (SPLM) attempt to put in a new constitution and declared that he would run for Chairman of the Party.

She stated that what started as a disagreement within the army turned political and then became ethnic. Ms. Ogwaro told participants, that the media is fuelling the war by distorting the facts surrounding its causes and that current situation is as bad as the 21-year civil war between Sudan and South Sudan. She further narrated that people are massively displaced, fear and suspicion are rampant, and people who are not in the army or the pertinent ethnic groups are fighting and looting. Ms. Ogwaro noted that women are suffering the most, and the use of child soldiers is very disturbing.

She informed the meeting that on 20 December, women started to mobilise and women parliamentarians asked warring parties to put down arms and negotiate, followed by women in Juba, smaller towns, and the Diaspora. They have since sought help from international parties. Ms. Ogwaro believes that women played a role in protecting and empowering each other, as well as in monitoring the cooperation agreement, following the Referendum. She envisages that they will once more be effective in bringing peace to the country by coordinating their efforts and receiving support from the international community.

Building on Ms. Ogwaro’s points, Ms. Rita Martin, Director of the Eve Organisation for Women Development, called what is happening in South Sudan disappointing and concerning. She appreciated the efforts of women’s groups to bring about peace and called for concrete strategies to tackle the conflict, incorporating continuous advocacy and engagement with different actors to voice the need for peace, and include women and youth at the domestic level. "Humanitarian assistance should pay attention to the special needs of women and children in conflict", she implored, going on to say that women need access to the mediators of the peace process and to take ownership of their involvement, with additional funding being needed to support all of these efforts. Ms. Martin asserted that South Sudanese women will keep on advocating for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325’s National Action Plan (NAP) and the New Deal
Peace Programme for Fragile States. She stressed that gender mainstreaming will help address the root causes of the conflict. She asked that youth not be manipulated into perpetrating the conflict by those with political interest and power.

**Ms. Harriette Williams-Bright of FAS** spoke on behalf of Ms. Brigitte Balipou, who previously spoke about the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) at the 2012 GIMAC. Since then, Ms. Balipou has advocated for a resolution on the situation – particularly on its impact on women – at the Human Rights Council in Geneva; represented the Women, Peace and Security Working Group in New York from which many bilateral meetings have resulted; and reached out to the African first ladies’ meeting in Paris. Her efforts, according to Ms. Williams-Bright, have brought about some change to the CAR situation, but she seeks the involvement of more women to resolve the conflict.

**DISCUSSION**

- Participants underscored the need for international assistance and peace efforts in South Sudan to be mindful of the wishes of local women, and seek to amplify their voices rather than dictate the process. Women in South Sudan have temporarily put aside their political, ideological and ethnic affiliations to engage in the peace process impartially. A cessation of hostilities has been signed in South Sudan, but representatives said that the country’s women must play a part in reconciliation, rebuilding and reinstituting political processes. They welcomed the help of friendly neighbouring countries but appealed for the involvement of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), AU and such regional bodies in the peace and reconstruction process.
- It was pointed out that veterans of the women’s movement can always be approached for support and guidance even when they are no longer active. Participants recognised that there is no generic formula for peace building, but there are ingredients and tools, that early warning and mapping are important, and the network of peace-builders can be tapped into.
- That peace must be bolstered with justice, reconciliation and healing in order to be sustainable was highlighted. In this regard, the AU DPA is developing a justice accountability framework for countries coming out of conflict. Peace-builders working in DRC have noted that there is a stigma against survivors of violence. Women are often forced to leave their homes or communities because they have been raped. All peace processes were urged to emphasise care for women survivors of SGBV and strive to empower them.
- A poignant point was made that women who fight for peace are sometimes at risk for daring to speak against power. Organisations within the GIMAC network were asked to call for the protection of such women.

**Session 6: Reporting on the GIMAC Interim Steering Committee**

This session was chair by **Ms. Hendrina Doroba, Acting Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE).**

**Dr. Angelina Dawa, Chair of the GIMAC Interim Steering Committee**, gave the meeting a breakdown of the Committee’s history, responsibilities, and next steps as follows:

- Since 2002, the GIMAC has held 23 bi-annual consultative meetings prior to AU Summits for women’s organisations and networks to share, discuss, and push forward the inclusion of women in decision-making processes.
- The GIMAC was officially launched in June 2006 at the 8th Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU in the Gambia, with the objective of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the SDGEA.
• It is composed of over 55 women’s organisations from around the continent, and partners with the AU, UNECA, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) among others.
• Managed by various member organisations, the GIMAC is composed of six clusters: Governance; Peace and Security; Human Rights; Health; Education; and Economic Empowerment.
• It also has a regional focal point for each of the five regions of Africa.

Dr. Dawa captured the value of the GIMAC to the African women’s movement in three ways:
• as a space for regular appraisal and evaluation of performance of the member states and civil society in SDGEA implementation;
• as an opportunity to consider and adjust strategies related to gender mainstreaming across the continent; and
• as a forum within which to explore emerging issues affecting women across Africa.

She highlighted the following relevant aspects of the GIMAC’s work as contributing to this value-addition:
• Documentation;
• Concretising the SDGEA index;
• Developing a Strategic Plan;
• Finding a co-host for the pre-Summit consultations;
• Introducing programmes in between bi-annual consultations; and
• Actualising the implementation of the various committees.

Dr. Dawa explained that the Interim Steering Committee was formed to steer GIMAC into maturity and is comprised of 12 organisations from its focal and thematic points. The Committee is responsible for articulating the background of the GIMAC and charting its evolution as well as facilitating the development of a strategic plan to guide future operations. The way forward, in strengthening the work of the committee, was detailed as involving four steps:
• Membership consultation (design questionnaire, circulate, collate responses and write and share report by June 2014)
• Organise a retreat in November 2014 that will chart out a possible way forward for the GIMAC (founder members and Consultant involvement; SWOT and PESTLE analysis, movement building, networks and coalitions)
• Present this way Forward in January 2015
• Usher in the GIMAC Steering Committee by June 2015

DISCUSSION
Committee representatives on the panel stated that access to funds is an important part of the Interim Steering Committee’s Terms of Reference. They reported that lobbying has commenced for an organisation to co-host with FAS, the search for sustainable funding sources is underway, and that current funders can be approached with the impact of the GIMAC’s consultations to counteract diminished funding. One member of the Diaspora has volunteered to chair the committee for funding proposal writing, which was seen as a small step in the right direction. Panellists said that organisers are considering asking member organisations to factor into their yearly budgets the cost of attending the consultations. Most member organisations have advocacy budgets for the next two years, which they may be asked to devote partially to the GIMAC platform.
Session 7: Adoption of Meeting Communiqué

This session was chaired by Dr. Thelma Awori, Board Chair of the Institute for Social Transformation, and the recommendations coming out of this 23rd GIMAC conference, were presented by Ms. Brenda Muturi, Policy Manager, Ipas Africa Alliance. They can be found in Annex 1 of this report. Following Ms. Muturi’s presentation, these recommendations were approved of by the meeting for submission to the AU Summit.

Closing Remarks

"PAWO spearheaded the establishment of several women’s organisations on the continent and has served as an example to guide them”, stated the Organisation’s President Mme. Assetou Koite. She stated that PAWO has worked closely with the GIMAC since its initiation in the struggle for peace and the implementation of various instruments. Recently, the Organisation celebrated its 50th anniversary, attended by 46 African countries, observer parties, and honoured by the presence of AUC Chairperson Dr. Dlamini-Zuma. “It was an occasion for us to look at the work we have done, the pitfalls that have slowed us down and the factors that have allowed us to move on,” said Mme. Koite. PAWO used the opportunity to recognise several personalities who have been of assistance, some of who are African Heads of State and others who were meeting participants. The President encouraged young people to become involved in PAWO activities around Africa and asked for recommendations that will act as a catalyst for African people.

The significance of the GIMAC pre-Summit Consultative meetings, in the opinion of Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo of the African Centre for Gender and Development, is that it is the only venue for CSOs to join the discourse on the development agenda. She assured participants that the GIMAC network will continue to lobby Heads of State and ministers in the next few days to ensure the inclusion of its recommendations in the Summit, and cited that the current head of the AUC has been part of GIMAC network for some time. Her summary of the two-day meeting touched upon agriculture, reproductive health, and conflict and what they mean for women – priorities to be refined to bring to the Summit and incorporated into all development agendas for Africa.

Ms. Ruzvidzo acknowledged the role FAS has played in coordinating the GIMAC network to allow it to have face-to-face dialogue and encouraged the participants to take the recommendations made here forward to their own networks. “On behalf of GIMAC, FAS, and the UNECA’s African Centre for Gender, thank you all for your contributions and the seriousness with which you have taken these deliberations,” she concluded.
Mme. Bineta Diop, Founder and Chair of the FAS Executive Board, began her closing remarks by recognising someone who has been central to the women’s movement, Ms. Yetunde Teriba, who is retiring from the AU to create an association to take care of the elderly. Ms. Teriba, currently the Head of the Gender Coordination and Outreach Unit at AUC, affirmed that she will end her career on a positive note. “What we should be doing as African women is not to duplicate but support what works. I know that I have sacrificed a lot to get things done at the AU, but I believe that we should think of our conscience and excel in all that we do,” she said.

“Once more at GIMAC I have learned a lot,” Mme. Diop continued, “this time about the needs of women in reproductive health, agriculture, and challenges like climate change.” She called for all organisations present to regularly track and report on recommendations made in the forum, and for the young women to take matters into hand. Mme. Diop acknowledged and thanked the GIMAC members and the various partner organisations for their role in the preparation of the meeting. She thanked all participants for executing a successful meeting and invited Mama Mongella to close with a few words of wisdom.

“Coming to GIMAC gives me new energy and it is my cue to keep working until our mission is complete,” said Ms. Gertrude Mongella former President of the Pan-African Parliament. “The fighting in the CAR, South Sudan, and DRC is a reminder to keep gender high on the agenda for peace. We strive to achieve a level of freedom where we can express our ideas without anyone feeling threatened. Do not be afraid to speak, because you may die quietly without accomplishing anything. You will never go wrong if you go by principle, and principles are those that do not violate human rights.”

### Advocacy Activities

The 23rd Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting was co-organised by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and Ipas Alliance Africa. Roughly 200 participants from the civil society organisations that form the GIMAC network, as well as individuals and organisations interested in the gender dimensions of the Summit, attended this meeting. A summary of key recommendations in English and French were produced and disseminated to the AUC, the RECs, African Heads of State and Government, African delegates and international development partners. In addition, the women of South Sudan were supported in the production of a statement that was disseminated to various dignitaries during the 22nd AU Summit. Furthermore, these South Sudanese women were provided with the space to present their statement to the Commissioners of the AUC’s Departments of Peace and Security and Political Affairs, who promised to follow up on the critical issues affecting the women of South Sudan. The statement may be found in Annex 2 of this Conference Report. The 23rd GIMAC meeting equally held a press conference at the UNECA, bringing together key media houses from Addis Ababa to increase the 23rd GIMAC’s visibility through targeted media coverage.
Outcome of the 23rd GIMAC Meeting

The Advocacy initiatives that complemented the 23rd GIMAC consultative meeting and the previous GIMAC meetings lead to several outcomes. One key outcome was the facilitation of meetings between women representatives of South Sudan produce a joint statement on the situation in their country, and their concerns in that regard. The statement was then presented to H.E. Dr. Aisha L. Abdullahi, the AU Commissioner of Political Affairs and H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui the AU Peace and Security Commissioner for submission to African Heads of State and Government during the 22nd AU Summit. To re-enforce the process, the women of South Sudan met with the newly appointed Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, Mrs. Bineta Diop to air their views.

As a result, the final outcome document from the 22nd Heads of State and Government Summit included several decisions that were born out of the advocacy efforts of the GIMAC network, as follows:

- **On Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR):** The summit endorsed the Chairperson’s recommendation – “To establish an annual award to recognize significant contributions or action of individuals, organisations and governments in Africa towards ending preventable maternal, new-born and child mortality as well as enhancing their survival and well-being”.

- **On Economic Development:** The Summit reiterated the GIMAC’s views on boosting intra-African trade, industrial development and economic integration as the most viable means for African countries to achieve structural transformation and sustainable development. The potential for this to that yield jobs for all citizens, particularly women and youth, was equally recognised by the Summit which reiterated the need to prioritise the implementation of the **Boo**sting **Intra-Africa Trade and the Continental Free Trade Area (BIAT/CFTA)** decisions at the national, regional and continental levels.

- **On Agriculture:** The Summit requested Member States, the Commission and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development’s (Nepad) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), together with stakeholders and development partners, to expand their collaboration towards sustaining the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The Summit reiterated the need to focus this collaboration on enhancing agro-industry and entrepreneurship; access to land for small-holder farmers, women and youth; linkages between job creation, food security and nutrition, as well as lesson learning on CAADP accomplishments.
Annex 1: Recommendations

(English)

We, representatives of African civil society organisations and African women and youth leaders, meeting under the umbrella of the Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) for the 23rd African Women’s Pre-Summit on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 23-24 January 2014;

Appreciating the support and collaboration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union, UN Women, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), Ipas Africa Alliance, African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF), Isis-Women’s International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), World YWCA, Women in Law and Development (WiLDAF), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), to amplify the voices of women from different parts of the continent;


Standing in solidarity with the people, particularly the women of South Sudan and Central African Republic in the face of ongoing conflicts in their countries;

Welcoming the decision of African Heads of State and Government to devote the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Summit of the African Union to the theme of “Agriculture and Food Security” and declaring 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, marking the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP);

Appreciating the support of the African Union Commission and particularly the Chairperson, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma for her commitment to the promotion of women’s rights and gender mainstreaming on the African continent and the vision of a prosperous Africa at peace with itself;

Having deliberated on prevailing and emerging issues affecting women and girls on the continent,

Urge the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to consider and take action on the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen peace-building and early warning initiatives on the African continent by fully and equally including women in conflict resolution processes, particularly in the resolution of the crises in South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

2. Take concrete measures to increase women’s ownership of land and make robust investments in innovation, science and technology to enhance agricultural production and improve women’s economic livelihoods.

3. Include women, smallholder farmers and youth in decision-making processes on climate change and post-2015 development processes and integrate climate change into goals on related issues such as energy, food security, water and health.
4. Increase access to family planning and reduce maternal mortality caused by unsafe abortions by ensuring access to safe abortion services within national laws and by renewing political commitment for women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights in line with the Maputo Protocol to “ensure that the right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted.”


6. Provide protection for women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and ensure effective humanitarian response mechanisms that guarantee social support and legal redress.

Adopted on 24 January 2014 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Annex 2: South Sudanese Women’s Statement

Statement from South Sudanese Women to the African Union (AU) and Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
24 January 2014
Addis Ababa

We, the women of South Sudan are shocked and disappointed by the recent outbreak of armed conflict in South Sudan, and are also concerned by the widespread violence that has led to a continuous loss of numerous lives and displacement of women, men, youth and children.

South Sudan women met at the SPLM secretariat in Juba on the 20th December 2013 to deliberate on how they can quickly intervene and seek all possible ways to end the crisis. Thereafter the women of South Sudan met various leaders to urge for dialogue and peace. The women also held a national meeting for women from all walks of life on the 15th January in Juba to discuss all possible interventions for peace. Similarly South Sudanese women in Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda held meetings on the same on the 17th January 2014 and 19th January 2014 respectively. On the 24th January 2014 we converged in Addis Ababa under the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) conference at the margins of the Heads of State meeting, to share our experiences and bring the different voices of women of South Sudan together for peace.

We are also concerned about the negative involvement of youth, both women and men, as combatants and agents of negative propaganda in the ongoing conflict; and demand that all parties to the conflict desist from involving the youth.

We recognise the historic participation of South Sudanese women in the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005; and the critical role they played during the 2011 South Sudan referendum for independence. We, the women of South Sudan are committed to continuously calling for and defending the peace and all that has been achieved since the signing of the CPA.

We acknowledge and appreciate the commitment of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and the SPLM/A in opposition for signing the cessation of hostilities agreement on the 23 January 2014 in Addis Ababa. We believe that this is an important step towards attaining a lasting peace in South Sudan. We also acknowledge that this is only the beginning of a difficult part of the peace process and believe that the inclusion and full participation of women in the process of mediation and negotiation is a prerequisite for the success of this process and sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Based on the above, we the women of South Sudan call on the AU and IGAD:

- To strongly urge all parties to the conflict not to breach the cessation of hostilities agreement.
- To commit to women’s participation in the next phase of the political mediation and negotiation as stipulated in the UNSCR 1325 and provide all necessary support.
- To urge all parties to the conflict and the UN to provide protection for women who advocate for peace, displaced women and particularly young women who are often targeted for abuse by the different conflicting parties.
- To urge all conflicting parties to open corridors for humanitarian assistance and also urge the humanitarian organisations to include special packages for women.

We call on our sisters in the African continent to continue supporting our cause and all actors to respond to the plea of South Sudanese women.