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Women from Darfur at the African Union

On the margins of the 10th African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 24 and 25 January 2008, nearly sixty women from Darfur will speak about their living conditions and the violence they face since the beginning of the conflict.

With the support of other African women and international experts, women from Darfur will draft a Plan of Action for Peace to present to decision-makers in Sudan, the AU, the United Nations (UN) and its Committee on the Status of Women, the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council and its Resolution 1325 (2000).

According to several international reports, tens of thousands of women in Darfur have been displaced and separated from their children, their husband, their family, their house and driven far away from their region. Since the beginning of the conflict, women in Darfur have been raped and killed *en masse*.

Information continues to stream in on how women from refugee camps are systematically raped when they leave the camps to fetch water, firewood or charcoal. Of all the conflicts in the world today, none seems to have as devastating an effect on women as the one in Darfur, and an end to the violence is not in sight.

The meeting between Darfuri women and their sisters in Addis Ababa will also allow the victims of conflicts from other regions of Africa to share their experiences and place a special focus on the gender aspect of the Plan of Action for Peace.

While few women were involved, the Darfur peace accords include some commitments vis-à-vis gender equality, the participation of women in the peace process, and the rights of women in general, but much remains to be done.

Initiated by Femmes Africa Solidarité, within the framework of its 11th AU Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting of the *Gender is My Agenda Campaign* network of NGOs, and in collaboration with the African Centre for Gender and Social Development of the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Women Gender and Development Directorate, this two-day consultation will also allow African women's lobbies to harmonise their strategies in order to integrate gender into the peace process in Sudan.

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