STATEMENT BY MADAME BINETA DIOP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF FEMMES AFRICA SOLIDARITE

ACCELERATING EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: ENSURING DUE DILIGENCE IN PREVENTION

Ms Thabisile Msezane,
Ms Bathabile Dlamini,
Ms Sandra Nelson-Zongo,
Distinguished Guests,

I would like to thank Ilitha Labantu for inviting me to speak on this important topic on Preventive Efforts to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

- Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. Too often, women's bodies are used as battlegrounds, as weapons of war and as tools of political oppression.

- I was watching CNN yesterday and a report came on that stated that 150 women are raped every month in DRC. Strong measures need to be taken to combat such actions.
• International and regional legal instruments have clarified the obligations of States to prevent, eradicate and punish violence against women and girls. As a reminder, Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) urges States

“To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination.”

• In Africa, we have such mechanisms as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Maputo Protocol. Article 4 of the Maputo Protocol urges State Parties to

“adopt such other legislative, administrative, social and economic measures as may be necessary to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women.”

• International instruments, such as UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, stress the importance of Protection, Prevention and Promotion to safeguard women’s rights. And recently, UNSCR 1888 was adopted, which strengthens UNSCR 1325 and mandates peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict.
• All these resolutions prevent and protect against a culture of impunity. On that note, I was happy to note that in April 2010, General Jerome Kakawu became the first General to be arrested in Congo’s history for war crimes on rape and torture.

• I also salute the Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon’s recent launch of the UNiTE Camapaign to end violence against women.

• We know from experience that Gender-Based Violence can be found in countries in conflict but also in countries not in conflict, as in Eastern Chad and Guinea.

• Recently, I was on a mission to Chad and spoke to a Chadian woman who was raped and then later was rejected by her husband.

• The stigma of rape, the lack of emotional support, the shame of the family underscores the need for trauma counseling for women survivors. We need to give the power back to women. We need to rehabilitate the survivors and to restore their dignity. We need to help them realise their hopes for the future.

• This is why women need the skills for prevention. We saw what happened in North Africa where demonstrators used technology to communicate and to organise.
- Women in Africa also need effective instruments to communicate and to organise. We saw how the internet helped to shed light on the violence that women in Guinea suffered at the stadium. We need to develop and promote the widespread use of early warning systems - for example - solar energy radios.

- Last Wednesday, FAS launched a book that highlights different mechanisms of prevention, early warning and a rights-based approach to protect women and prevent against violence.

- For all of us here, we need to continue to be in solidarity with women survivors, sensitise people about their situation and continue to work with them.

Thank you.