



## Femmes Africa Solidarité

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## ***PRESS RELEASE***

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## **8<sup>th</sup> PRE-SUMMIT CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE AFRICAN UNION, 26-27 JUNE BANJUL, GAMBIA**

In an effort to push forward women's effective participation in the African Union (AU) and its Member States, network members of the 'Gender is my Agenda' campaign, coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) in partnership with ACDHRS, held the 8th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU on 26-27, 2006 in Banjul, Gambia facilitated by Her Excellency Issau Ms Isatou Njie Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia.

The meeting was the 8<sup>th</sup> in a series of Pre-Summit consultations of civil society networks who are concerned with mainstreaming gender within AU organs, activities and processes. As such, the meeting built upon the favourable context that emerged from the commitment to gender parity through the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) by the conference of the African Heads of State and Government in July 2004. The SDGEA calls for continued implementation of gender parity in the AU and at the national level, the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the protection of women against violence and discrimination.

Two years since the adoption of the SDGEA and after the Heads of State made a commitment to report annually on the progress made in mainstreaming gender into their activities in the areas of health, education, peace and security, economic development, human rights and governance, no such reports have been presented. Because of this shortcoming, this meeting

was particularly important to allow civil society organizations to come together to assess the implementation status of the Solemn Declaration by the different responsible parties.

At the meeting, thematic and sub-regional focal points of the “Gender is my Agenda” campaign presented reports on the status of women in Africa, with particular emphasis on the areas of health, education, economic empowerment, human rights, peace and security, and governance. Participants also engaged in dialogue over how best to proceed with the campaign and established guidelines and recommendations for future reporting on the SDGEA.

At the meeting, participants recognized with appreciation the following achievements:

1. The holding of the first conference of Ministers responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs in Africa;
2. The Establishment of the African Union Women’s Committee;
3. The entry into force of the Protocol of the Rights of Women in Africa in November 2005;
4. The application of the parity principle in the commission in the AU including the Commission on Human and People’s Rights and the ECOSOCC; The steps taken by the AU to investigate the allegations of sexual abuse by AU peacekeeping force in Darfur.

Participants also called attention to the following unfulfilled commitments, two years after the adoption of the Solemn Declaration:

1. No report has been presented on the implementation;
2. An African Trust Fund for Women has not yet been established;
3. The parity principle has not been applied in the nomination of judges the Africa Court on Human Rights;
4. Violence and sexual abuse of women are intensifying;
5. No concrete steps have been taken to prevent recruitment of child soldiers.

In light of both the successes and shortcomings, participants made recommendations on the way forward. The final report with recommendations is still in the processes of being drafted; however recommendations will touch on the themes of expanding the application of gender parity in all AU organs, particularly the Pan African Parliament; promoting the economic empowerment of women at all levels of society, particularly at the grassroots level; emphasizing gender equality in education initiatives, with a focus on the rights and protection

of the girl child; promoting health programs that specifically address the needs of women and their vulnerability, particularly in conflict zones, to HIV, Malaria and Tuberculosis; ending the culture of impunity in post-conflict situations and calling for justice for gender-based violence; working to protect the rights of women and reducing the level of gender-based violence and harmful practices that threaten the security of women; increasing the role of youth in the women's movement and in decision-making mechanisms in general; focusing on sustainable development projects that address the needs of women in post-conflict situations; and calling for the establishment of national plans of action on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

For the final report and for more details about Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), please visit our website [www.fasngo.org](http://www.fasngo.org)

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*FAS is an international women's organisation with the ECOSOC Consultative Status working to empower African women to assume a leadership role in peace building, and conflict resolution. FAS programmes operate mainly in war-torn countries such as the Mano River and the Great Lakes regions. As well, FAS works closely with African sub-regional and regional organs such as ECOWAS and the African Union to ensure greater involvement of women in decision-making processes for peace and development*



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