



Femmes Africa Solidarité

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INFORMATION NOTE

FAS Puts Darfur-Chad, DRC Conflicts on Agenda at UN Security Council, UK Labour Government

Since returning from the research and solidarity mission in eastern Chad, Bineta Diop, Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), has been working tirelessly to bring the voices of Darfur's and Chad's refugee and internally displaced women to the international community. Most recently, FAS' advocacy activities brought Mme Diop to the United Nations Security Council in New York City, USA.

On 1 October at an Arria Formula Meeting with members of the Security Council and other NGOs, Mme Diop and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and president of the NGO Realizing Rights, spoke on the dire human rights situation in Darfur, eastern Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both women made concrete policy recommendations for the deployment of the UN-AU hybrid force, the EU border protection force that will be deployed to the Sudan-Chad border, and for the management of the ongoing conflict in the DRC. Their recommendations are meant to ensure that women's rights in these situations are adequately addressed and that all post-conflict reconstruction processes fully incorporate women as decision-makers.

This advocacy mission on behalf of women in Darfur and Chad began just over a month ago when Mme Diop and Ms. Robinson travelled together to eastern Chad in early September on a fact-finding and solidarity mission to the refugee camps of the region. Six other prominent women also took part in the mission, including Asha Hagi Elmi Amin, leader of Somalia's Sixth Clan and a member of the Somali parliament.

Since returning from Chad, Mme Diop has met with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, and Rama Yade, French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in Paris. In Geneva, Mme Diop met with several African delegations to the United Nations, most notably the delegations of Sudan and the DRC.

In London, Mme Diop attended the Labour Party's annual convention on 22 and 23 September. As a representative of the mission, she met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown to confirm the Labour Government's support for the plight of women in Darfur and Chad. The Prime Minister addressed the crisis in his speech to the convention, stating:

"People will look back on events in Darfur as they did in Rwanda and say why did you the most powerful countries in the world fail to act, to come to the aid of those with the least power? Who can fail to be moved by the mother in Darfur who saved her two youngest children from militias and hid them away? She rushed back to her village to find her husband and older son murdered - and then was repeatedly raped by the Janjawid. All for being a member of the wrong tribe, all for acting upon that shared human impulse to protect her own children. ... we will not rest until there is an end to the aerial bombings, a ceasefire, a lasting political settlement and justice for the women and children of Darfur."

Along with the seven other women of the mission, Mme Diop signed an open letter written by Asha Hagi Elmi Amin that was published in Kenya's *East African* daily newspaper on 11 September. Addressing the public and policymakers, the letter emphasized the need for immediate action and concerted effort by the international community, especially



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African leaders, to put an end to the atrocities in the Darfur region. Part of this letter was re-stated in the oral intervention made by FAS on 24 September to the Human Rights Council during the debate on the human rights situation in Sudan. The letter states:

“A few weeks ago, several African governments pledged more troops for the new joint UN-African Union "hybrid" force agreed in July. Moreover, a number of African leaders have been involved in the political discussions to bring all the parties to the negotiating table. We salute these efforts and invite them to do more. ... The conflict can be solved. But it requires political will, it requires resources, and it requires boldness to move out of the inertia that has lasted too long, towards a lasting solution. African governments can and must do more. They have to provide the leadership that is needed.”

After the Arria Formula in New York, Mme Diop flew back to Dakar, Senegal, on 4 October for a press briefing on the experience of her visit to Chad. The briefing also included the presentation of FAS' latest study on the women's movement for peace and security in Africa, *The Women's Movement for Peace and Security in Africa: Ten years of practice*.

The work of Mme Diop and the other women that undertook the mission to eastern Chad has received widespread press coverage and positive publicity. Thanks to the efforts of Mme Diop and her fellow mission delegates, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has pledged his support to bring a group of women from Darfur and Chad to the peace negotiations on 27 October in Tripoli, Libya. By representing the interests of women affected by the conflict, their participation in the peace negotiations will help broker a lasting peace agreement that guarantees the respect of women's rights in Chad and Sudan.

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