



Femmes Africa Solidarité

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INFORMATION NOTE

PRESIDENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL APPOINTS TWO WOMEN TO DARFUR HIGH LEVEL ASSESSMENT MISSION

Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, the President of the Human Rights Council, has announced that the High Level Mission to Darfur will be led by Jody Williams, a recipient of the Noble Peace Prize in 1997, and the co-founder of a civil society which campaigns against the use of landmines. Sima Samar, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, will also be joining the Mission. Dr Samar is the former deputy president of Afghanistan and former minister of women's affairs has long been an advocate for the promotion of women's rights in Afghanistan. The High Level Mission will be assessing the current human rights situation in Darfur and is due to report to the Council at its fourth regular session to be held from 12th March to 5th April 2007.

The decision to send a high level special mission of investigation to observe in Darfur should be seen as a great achievement for women's networks which have been working tirelessly to raise attention over the issue of the violation of women's rights in Darfur. In December 2006, at the 4th Session of the Human Rights Council for the Special Session on the Human Rights Situation in Darfur, a representative from Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) addressed the Council highlighting the lack of a sustained international effort to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis, particularly the suffering of women and girls.

Women and girls are being systematically raped and tortured whilst the perpetrators continue to be immune from punishment. At the special meeting, FAS called for the Government of Sudan to be made accountable in the creation of an enabling environment which would allow the investigation, reporting and prosecution of cases of abuse of women's rights. It is hoped that the presence of two women in the six person mission will guarantee a gender perspective in this investigation, in order to highlight the violation of women's rights whilst also focusing attention on the role women can play in the advancement of peace, development and security.

Further, FAS has long campaigned for women and civil society to be at the centre of humanitarian and political initiatives. The appointment of Jody Williams to head the mission is symbolic of the compromise reached in sending highly respected and experienced representatives from civil society, in order to ensure the objectivity of the mission.

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