



femmes africa solidarité

Dear FAS Members, Networks and Friends,

The past three months have been full of exciting and large-scale events for Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and its network. The African Gender Forum and Award was met with great success in December and we are only just emerging from the intense and successful advocacy activities that followed the African Women's Consultation on Darfur, held in Addis Ababa on 24 and 25 January. FAS is also pleased to share the outcome document of its 11th Pre Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union, as part of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign.

With these latest events, particularly with our activities focusing on Darfur, FAS is embarking on a new phase of work with renewed enthusiasm. Your support and interest are invaluable to us, and we hope you will enjoy reading and learning about our activities in this latest issue of FAS News.

Yours in solidarity,

Bineta Diop, Executive Director

FAS BRINGS SUDAN WOMEN TO THE AFRICAN UNION, ADVOCATES FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE PEACE PROCESS

Nearly 100 people from Darfur, the rest of Sudan and across Africa and the rest of the world came to Addis Ababa to attend the first-ever African Women's Consultation on Darfur. The Consultation was organised to bring together women from Darfur and their sisters from across Africa to draft a Darfuri Women Plan of Action for Peace.

The Consultation was held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, following the 11th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU.

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) designed this project to bring women together and to make them significant actors in the peace process in Darfur. The Consultation was conceived as a forum in which women from the Darfur region could discuss the conflict from a gender perspective, identify strategies for action, and take ownership of their planned activities. FAS hopes to help redress the situation of women caught up in the conflict in Sudan's western region.

The participants were mostly women from Sudan. Many among them were leaders from civil society organisations, academics and professionals working in the areas of human rights and women's rights. Along with experts from the rest of Africa and the world, these women shared experiences and participated in small group sessions focused on the gender aspect of the agenda for peace.



Delegates from Sudan with Members of FAS at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. (Photo: FAS)

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ADDIS ABABA PRE-SUMMIT FOCUSES ON WOMEN AND AFRICAN INDUSTRIALISATION

Every six months, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and the Gender is My Agenda Campaign meet for the Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union. The 11th Pre-Summit was held from 22-23 January 2008, on the margins of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU).



11th Pre-Summit delegates in session at the UN Economic Commission for Africa. (Photo: FAS)

More than sixty representatives from the NGOs that make up the Gender is My Agenda Campaign met at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The conference room was filled to capacity and the discussions frequently continued after sessions finished, during coffee breaks and lunches.

The theme of the 11th Pre-Summit was 'The Industrialisation of the African Continent: The gender perspective'. Experts from across Africa came to share their views on the subject. Several prominent women and ex-

perts attended the event. Gisèle Mandaila, Secretary of State for Families and Persons with Disabilities of Belgium and Fatou Bensouda, Deputy Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, were among the special guests invited to address the conference.

Along with discussions surrounding industrialisation and gender in Africa, the members of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign reviewed the progress made by the AU in the past six months in gender mainstreaming. The AU has made significant progress, most notably in guaranteeing an even male-female split in the AU Commission, and by working towards the same balance in the hiring policies of other AU bodies. However, much work remains to be done, and the Gender is My Agenda Campaign continues its work in monitoring, evaluating and making recommendations.

The Pre-Summits are also regular occasions for networking among NGOs and civil society representatives of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign.

In organising the Pre-Summits and producing recommendations, the Gender is My Agenda Campaign highlights the importance of civil society must in holding the AU accountable to its commitments in gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's rights on the continent. The Recommendations and

Solemn Declaration of the 11th Pre-Summit were drafted on 25 January and, as in previous years, were brought to the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the AU.

The 11th Pre-Summit was extended by two days to include the African Women's Consultation on Darfur. The objective of this conference was to help Sudanese women draft a plan of action for peace in Darfur.

The Pre-Summit was organised by FAS and the Gender is My Agenda Campaign with the support of the African Union Gender Directorate, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

Since 2003, FAS and its network have been organising the Pre-Summits twice each year prior to the regular AU meetings of Heads of State and Government. The Pre-Summits and their advocacy activities have resulted in notable achievements such as the landmark adoption of the gender parity principle in the African Union. In 2004, the AU Commission made the parity principle a reality by electing an even number of male and female commissioners to the AU Commission.

The Gender is My Agenda Campaign was established in 2006 at the 8th Pre-Summit in Banjul, Gambia. The Campaign monitors the progress of the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) in the AU. The SDGEA was adopted by the AU in July 2004 during its Third Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In Brief: 11th Pre-Summit Solemn Statement and Recommendations

On 23 January, the members of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign drafted the Solemn Statement and Recommendations of the 11th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union. The five-page document includes recommendations on a variety of thematic areas relating to women, with a special emphasis on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). Because the African Union (AU) Ordinary Session focused on industrialisation in Africa, the recommendations also address the role of women in industrialisation. For example, the Campaign recommends that in the process of industrialisation in Africa, the AU should help women achieve economic self-sufficiency. Other recommendations addressed good governance, peace and security, human rights, education, health, economic empowerment, and the proposed continental government. To read the complete Solemn Statement, visit the FAS website, www.fasngo.org.



RWANDA HONOURED AT AFRICAN GENDER AWARD, 12 DECEMBER 2007, DAKAR, SENEGAL

On 12 December 2007, the Daniel Sorano National Theatre in central Dakar was filled to capacity with guests waiting to see President Paul Kagame and Rwanda receive the 2007 African Gender Award on behalf of Rwanda. Selected for its outstanding work in gender mainstreaming, Rwanda was chosen by the Award Selection Committee of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) to receive this second Africa-wide award.

The award is given every two years to an African country and its Head of State for outstanding accomplishments in gender mainstreaming. Nominees are judged by a committee of 14 people on the criteria in the SDGEA.

President Kagame came to Dakar as the guest of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who hosted the award ceremony. President Wade told a very supportive audience 'You are right in awarding President Paul Kagame. My African brother from Rwanda is one of the greatest standard-setters in women's rights on our continent.'

In his award acceptance speech, President Kagame told the public, 'Prohibiting more than half of a country's population from engaging in productive socioeconomic activity amounts to short-sightedness – and is without question, a waste of human resources. Therefore a nation that promotes women is not doing women a favour but, doing the nation itself a favour'. The president demurely accepted the award statue, Nandi, carved from wood and detailed with sterling silver.

Several countries were candidates for the 2007 award, including Liberia, which has a female head of state, but Rwanda was seen as the highest-performing country in the promotion and protection of women's rights in Africa.

Since the end of the genocide in the mid-1990s, Rwanda has done much to promote women. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was successfully implemented. In addition, nearly half of the members of the national parliament are women, as are one-third of government ministers, 42 percent of representatives in local governments, and one-third of the Supreme Court judges, including its president.



Delegates after session. (Photo: Violaine Beix, FAS)

The African Gender Award also honours civil society and private sector actors from the award recipient country. The women's NGO network *Pro Femmes / Twese Hamwe* and the *Banque Populaire pour la Promotion de la Femme* were both honoured at the award ceremony with special engraved plates.

Pro Femmes is a network of 48 civil society organisations that work for gender equality in Rwanda. It helped bring women into the constitution-writing process and was also instrumental in the implementation of the *gacaca* courts system, in which Rwandan women play an important part. The *Banque Populaire pour la Promotion de la Femme* was established in 2001. It provides loans to women who own small and medium-sized enterprises. Its main objective is to support Rwandan women so that they can contribute to the country's economy.

The African Gender Award ceremony was the closing event of the 2007 African Gender Forum, held at the *Centre des Conférences* of Cheikh Anta Diop University II in central Dakar. Nearly 300 participants from across Africa and the world came to participate. The theme focused on gender and migration. More than 30 panellists shared their expertise in five different panel discussions. The Forum also drafted a series of recommendations so that African states and the international community may take action on the condition of African women affected by migration.

Coumba Fall, the principal organiser of the African Gender Forum and Award, says the event was hugely successful and unprecedented in its scope and outcome. 'The Forum was an opportunity to discuss and strategise new ways of building strong bridges between African women and the diaspora. In partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), FAS was able to propose a positive agenda on migration, with a main goal of reinforcing the economic partnership between the African diaspora and women on the continent. We had the support of three governments that are very involved in this theme (Italy, Portugal, Spain) and enjoyed the support of organisations interested in gender and development like the UNIFEM, the African Development Bank, OSIWA, the African Women's Development Fund, and NEPAD. We believe that the recommendations that came out of the Forum will set a new agenda.'



The African Gender Award Selection Committee with President Paul Kagame and President Abdoulaye Wade. (Photo: Aliou Mbaye, Panapress)



FAS ELECTED TO AFRICAN UNION ECOSOCC AS CONTINENTAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) was elected to the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union (AU) on 31 October, 2007 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. FAS ran as a candidate during the elections for continental civil society organisations.

A total of 270 organisations from 44 African countries applied to run in the elections. FAS was elected as a member of the General Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the ECOSOCC, along with seven other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work at the continental-level. After being short listed as an election candidate in early October, FAS presented its election platform prior to the ballot-casting. Julienne Ondziel, former President of the Executive Board of FAS, led the FAS delegation.

This election is an important victory for FAS and its network. Participating in the ECOSOCC will ensure that the voices of women, particularly those from the conflict zones in which FAS works, will be brought to the African Union level. Women can thus access the AU and contribute their input to continental-level policymaking.

The ECOSOCC is holding elections for a total of 150 NGOs and civil society organisations that work at the national, regional, continental levels and in the African Diaspora.

The ECOSOCC is a consultative body composed of representatives from different social and professional



Saida Agrebi (left) with members of the Legal Council, tallying votes
(Photo: FAS)

groups of AU Member States. Its primary purpose is to ensure the participation of African civil society in the AU policy process. The membership of the Council also reflects its core principle of gender equality. The ECOSOCC was formed according to Article 22 of the Constitutive Act of the AU (adopted in 2000). Its Statute was adopted at the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2004. The first set of popularly elected members (to replace the interim Council members) were elected before the end of 2007.

WOMEN FROM SUDAN DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION FOR PEACE, TELL AU TO INCLUDE WOMEN IN THE DARFUR PEACE PROCESS

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After examining the impact of the Darfur conflict on women, delegates shared the various peacebuilding initiatives in which they were involved in at the national and international level. In small group sessions, the participants of the Consultation identified the issues and priority areas on which the Plan of Action should focus.

Participants identified three main areas on which their efforts should focus: engaging effectively with the existing Darfur Peace Process, security issues, and moving from humanitarian relief to recovery and reconstruction.

The Consultation helped raised awareness about women's particular situation in Darfur and enjoyed widespread media coverage. More importantly, the participants worked hard together to draft a strategy for advocacy activities and a Plan of Action for Peace. The document was then brought to the Ordinary Session of the AU Heads of State and Government for their consideration.

FAS has been vocal on the plight of women in Sudan since 2004. FAS has regularly brought women from Darfur to speak at the UN Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva, Switzerland. It has organised several panel discussions with grassroots women and human rights experts on the conflict, and has addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and the UN Security Council in New York, USA, on the issue.

The Consultation was organised by FAS with the support of the African Union Gender Directorate, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom.

The resulting African Women's Declaration on Darfur and the Plan of Action were the basis of concerted advocacy activities at the 10th Ordinary AU Session of Heads of State and Government, which ran from 31 January to 2 February, 2008, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The African Women's Declaration on Darfur and the Plan of Action are available on the FAS website at www.fasngo.org.



OTHER NEWS

New Faces at FAS Geneva and FAS Dakar

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) is pleased to welcome seven new members to its staff in the Geneva and Dakar offices. Sol Pradelli has taken over from Roberta Méan as Coordinator of the International Secretariat in Geneva. Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sol holds an MPA in Public Administra-



Rosalie Lo and Alessandra Bo (Photo: Violaine Beix, FAS)

tion from the University of Leiden, Netherlands. She started out at FAS as an intern in summer 2007. Alice Massari joined the team in autumn of 2007 as coordinator of FAS' Regional Office in Dakar. Alice has a Master's in International Relations, and worked as coordinator of Italy's National Audi and Volkswagen Resellers Association. The Dakar office is also pleased to welcome Alessandra Bo as Programme Assistant to Rosalie Lo. Alessandra is a public health specialist with field experience in the Sudan and the DR Congo. New interns in the Geneva office include: Sarah Azia (Networking), Fanny Petitbon (Partnerships and Fundraising) and Mukalya Nampito (Information and Communications). As well, Abdou Sylla joins FAS in Geneva as Administration and Finance Assistant to Kukikila Bindanda.

FAS Joins CONGO Board, IOM as Observer

On 7 December, 2007, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) was elected as a member of the Board of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO). Elected with 64 votes, FAS will serve on the Board for three years. The Board oversees the work of CONGO between sessions of the CONGO General Assembly.

The work of CONGO consists in facilitating NGO access to the debate process at the United Nations. CONGO has helped FAS develop a high profile at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, by providing resources and support to FAS during the preparations leading up to the Human Rights Council sessions.

Along with this latest achievement, FAS has also just been granted observer status with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). FAS is among the more than 40 non-governmental organisations that hold observer status. FAS has recently undertaken work on issues of women and migration, most notably by making this topic the main theme of the 2007 African Gender Forum, which took place in Dakar, Senegal, on 10 and 11 December. It is therefore fitting that FAS begin to collaborate with the IOM on migration issues by contributing its experience and expertise at IOM consultations.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Parallel Events Planned for CSW in New York and HRC in Geneva

Building on its recent work on women and human rights in the Darfur region of Sudan, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) is organising a parallel event during the 7th Human Rights Council meeting at the United Nations in March 2008. The 7th Session will take place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 3 to 28 March 2008.

FAS' activities at this session of the Human Rights Council will focus on its work in Darfur. FAS has invited five women experts from Sudan to speak at a parallel event on the human rights situation of women in the Darfur conflict. In preparation, the FAS staff will also attend a training at the International Service for Human Rights, an NGO based in Geneva, to learn more about how the Human Rights Council functions, and how FAS can make strategic use of the Council's mechanisms for its advocacy work.

FAS will also be making oral statements to the Council on the Darfur issue. As well, FAS is looking forward to the presentation of the Report by Yakin Ertürk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and

consequences.

In March, FAS will also be participating in the 52nd Session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, USA. FAS will be holding three parallel events during the session, focusing on its advocacy work over the past years, and on its recently launched project on Darfur.

On 25 February, FAS will host an event titled 'Women's Empowerment in Africa: The experience of FAS and the Spanish Cooperation.' This will be followed by a second event on 28 February called 'Women, 1325 and then years of practice in engendering the peace process'. FAS' final parallel event on 29 February will focus on Darfur. The outcome documents of the African Women's Consultation on Darfur (held in January 2008) will be presented.

The CSW was established in 1946. It is a part of the UN Economic Social and Cultural Committee (ECOSOC) and is the principal global policymaking body on gender equality and the advancement of women. The CSW meets each year at the UN in New York and reports to ECOSOC on issues relating to gender.