



femmes africa solidarité

Dear FAS Members, Networks and Friends,

Femmes Africa Solidarité has been working hard over the last few months to reach its objectives of promoting African women. Some of the recent activities FAS has participated in and organized include the 4th and 5th sessions of the Human Rights Council, the 10th African Union Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting, and the APF-CSO meeting held in Berlin, which was the first of its kind to include civil society organizations.

The new website has been online for the last few weeks and we hope you have been able to take advantage of it. We would greatly appreciate your comments or suggestions.

Yours in solidarity,

Mme Bineta Diop

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ACCRA CONFERENCE DISCUSSES AU GOVERNMENT

In preparation for the 9th ordinary session of the African Union (AU) in Accra, Ghana, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and its partner networks organized the 10th AU Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on 23rd and 24th June 2007. Because the African Union (AU) session was focused on the proposed integration of states under an 'African Union Government', the key objective of the 10th AU Pre-Summit Meeting was to ensure that women are included in the discussions and consultations for the proposed integration.

The AU Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting devised strategies to make women's rights and gender issues a priority in the constitution of the continental government. The result was the Accra Inputs to the Grand Debate on Union Government. This document includes twelve recommendations to ensure that gender parity and women's rights are seriously addressed in the AU consultations. In it, women's civil society networks urge the Assembly of Heads of State to include the gender parity principle in the Constitutive Act of the Union Government, and to make women and gender issues its first strategic area of focus.

The establishment of a union government presents a new opportunity to review compliance with the gender parity principle. For this reason, FAS and its partners emphasized the possibilities that the proposed AU government presents for the advancement of women and gender issues in Africa. For example, the union's proposed Specialized Finance Institutions would allow for the advancement of women in high levels of AU government, as would the proposed Gender and Women's Council.

The Accra Inputs also include a resolution drafted by the Gender is My Agenda campaign on the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA). The campaign expresses its disappointment at the fact that very few member states had submitted their progress reports on the implementation of SDGEA and urges member states to implement it before the next AU Summit in January, 2008. The resolution also calls on member states to ratify the Protocol to the Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. This resolution built on the work of the 9th AU Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting where civil society groups presented the Civil Society Shadow Report on the progress made in the implementation of SDGEA.

In preparation for the 11th AU Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting early next year, FAS and its partner networks will continue to advocate for the implementation of the SGDEA in all AU member states along with the submission of implementation progress reports by next January.

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

4th Session: 12th—30th March 2007

The Human Rights Council held its 4th Session from the 12th to 30th March 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland. On the 16th March the findings and recommendations of the High Level Mission to Darfur were presented. A report to the Council on the current situation in Liberia was also presented on the 23rd March.

FAS staff monitored discussions of the Plenary session of the Human Rights Council, especially analyzing country reports, thematic issues and special procedures on the African region.

Mrs Agnes Taylor Lewis, from the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) made a statement, on behalf of FAS, to support the work of the international community in Sierra Leone, calling for renewed effort in Liberia.

FAS also monitored the adoption of gender sensitive perspective in the work of special procedures, particularly welcoming the report of Professor Yakin Ertuk, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against

Women, Its Causes and Consequences.

FAS cooperated with other NGOs and activists from Darfur to lobby for a resolution and made a statement during the session on Darfur, denouncing the deterioration of the situation. FAS also called for the support of international community to AU forces and for the integration of women in the peace process.

FAS also organised a panel "Women and War in Africa, experiences, responses and implementation of 1325", which gathered together a wide spectrum of actors - from Darfuri women activists to ambassadors - and marked an important step in the dialogue between civil society and governments on the Darfur situation. Panellists included Professor Erturk and Marianne Mollmann of Human Rights Watch.

In its final resolutions, the Human Rights Council mentioned violence against women and appointed a panel of special procedures including Professor Ertuk.



Mrs Bineta Diop with Mrs Agnes Taylor Lewis



During the panel held by FAS



FAS staff from the Dakar, Geneva and New York offices

5th Session: 11th—20th June 2007

The Human Rights Council (HRC) held its 5th Sessions from the 11th to 20th June 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland. Among the reports given was one prepared by the Group of Experts on the human rights situation in Darfur.

A report on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was to be presented by Mr. Titinga Frédéric Pacéré, the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the DRC but unfortunately, the session was cancelled and postponed until the 6th Session of the Human Rights Council.

FAS had prepared a statement on the situation in the country, based on information received from women's networks in the DRC. An updated version of the statement will be presented in the fall.

A report on the situation in Somalia was also due to be presented by the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Mr. Ghanim Alnajjar. However, owing to the security situation in Somalia, resulting from the recent conflict in the country, the expert was unable to undertake his mission. Mr Alnajjar gave only an oral report. FAS will be making a statement, also based on information from its networks there, in the next session.

FAS was also able to give a statement during the interactive session on Darfur, and plans to participate in the future sessions on the DRC and Somalia.

The group of experts on the human rights situation in Darfur was mandated by the 4th Session of the HRC, in resolution 4/8, to follow up on the implementation of resolutions and recommendations on Darfur adopted by the HRC, the former Commis-

sion on Human Rights. The group was composed of seven mandate holders and was presided by Ms Sima Samar, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

FAS's advocacy work was successful as Professor Erturk, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, was included in the group of experts: a real acknowledgement that women in Darfur face specific challenges requiring unique solutions.

Equally, the report presented at the 5th Session placed great emphasis on the plight of women and made numerous recommendations concerning the protection of women. FAS gave a statement welcoming this thorough report, and praised the focus on women, but urged the Council to make sure the promises of the Government of Sudan were followed through.

Germany's G8 Presidency Focuses on Africa: African Civil Society to play larger role in discussions

In the build-up to the annual G8 Summit, FAS participated in several civil society events, advocating for greater awareness and action on the role of women in peace and security initiatives in Africa. An especially important event was the African Partnership Forum's Civil Society Organization Dialogue (APF-CSO) which was held on 20th May 2007 in Berlin, Germany. This forum preceded the 8th African Partnership Forum (APF) which ran from 22nd to 23rd May. The APF-CSO marked the first time that civil society organizations like FAS were able to make recommendations to the APF to present at the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, on 6th to 8th June 2007.

The 8th African Partnership Forum (APF) was held in Berlin, Germany, from the 22nd to the 23rd May, in preparation for the G8 Summit, held in Heiligendamm, Germany in early June. Speaking at the opening of the APF, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Minister of Cooperation and Development for Germany, stated that these events are a vital opportunity to strengthen the partnership between G8 countries and African states. As well, these meetings provide an ideal forum to discuss recommendations and strategies for future action. The Minister also revealed that she kept a leaflet from the Gender is My Agenda Campaign on her office wall as a reminder of the progress made in the advancement of African women in politics and public life.

The APF was established in 2003 at the G8 Summit in Evian, France. Since then, the Forum has preceded all the G8 summits, bringing together high-level representatives of G8 countries, African Union (AU) member states, and their development institutions. This year, Germany, Denmark, the NEPAD Secretariat and Ghana (representing the AU) co-chaired the Forum, which was attended by over 200 delegates. Other participants included the Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and the President of Botswana, Festus Mogae. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President of Liberia, also addressed the forum.

The Forum focused on four topics: peace and security, growth and investment, climate change, and gender equality. The 2007 APF meeting was the first time that civil society organizations (CSO) were able to present recommendations. These recommendations were drafted at the pre-summit – the APF-CSO – held in Berlin on 20th May. Mme Bineta Diop, Executive Director of FAS, made a presentation on the subject of peace and security, where she focused on the role of women and the use and implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325) in peace and security situations.

Her recommendations were included in the statement which was presented to the APF. The statement recommends that G8 Member States undertake to ensure gender budgeting is included in the Trust Fund for reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes. As well, G8 Member States are urged to take adequate measures to avoid the abuse of vulnerable groups in the extractive industries. When presented with the position papers, Minister Wieczorek-Zeul stated: "I am pleased that on the road to the 8th Session of the APF we will for the first time clearly hear the voice of Africa's civil society on the G8 Africa agenda. For me, civil society in Africa is thus making an important contribution to the preparations for the 2007 G8 Africa policy and beyond."

Statement by African Partnership Forum -Civil Society Organizations (APF-CSO) On Peace and Security:

We call on the G8 and the APF to establish a timeline and benchmarks for meeting the G8 goals of the Africa Action Plan and Evian Annex.

The G8 Member States must adopt or support AU common positions on peace and security as their guide for their interaction with, and assistance to, Africa at continental, regional and national levels. Furthermore, the G8 must align international efforts for post-conflict reconstruction with African Benchmark standards that are long-term in nature.

We call upon all partners to recognize women's role in all aspects of peace, security, humanitarian and development initiatives, and further call on Africa and its development partners to support the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (1325), which addresses protection of women during armed conflict, and calls for an end to impunity for gender-based abuses during and after conflict, the integration of a gender perspective in peace-making and peace-keeping, and the participation of women in all levels of decision-making and issues related to prevention management and resolution of conflict.

Within the NEPAD framework and the G8 African Action Plan, African leaders and their development partners acknowledged that peace and security is a key condition for sustainable development, to ensure peaceful and secure environment in Africa. In line with this understanding, we recommend that:

1. The G8 Member States should support the appointment of more women in conflict prevention, management and resolution and reconstruction, particularly to promote the appointment of women as Envoys, Representatives, Reporters and Heads of Peace Negotiations; and also to create a gender desk in peacekeeping operations and fact finding missions.

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Accra Inputs to the Grand Debate on Union Government and Implementation of Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa



On the Union Government ...

We, the civil society organizations working across Africa, urge the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to:

Include the gender parity principle in the new Constitutive Act of the Union Government and maintain it in all the Organs, structures and programmes of the African Union Government, Regional Economic Communities and National Governments as stated in the SDGEA;

Ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all the proposed 16 strategic focus areas and the eventual community domain of the Union Government;

Separate the existing Gender and Youth joint strategic area of focus in the Study on an African Union Government to become two separate and distinct areas of focus;

Give priority to women and gender issues by ensuring that it becomes the first strategic area of focus for the Union Government;

Establish a Gender and Women's Council as part of the Council in Configuration as proposed in the study on the Union Government;

Use the opportunity of the establishment of the Union Government to review compliance with the AU Gender Parity Principle in the protocol setting up the Pan African Parliament in addition to the Commission on Human and People's Rights and the African Court on Human Rights;

Make the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the AUWC be observers at meetings of the Peace and Security Council, and also ensure that this advisory body regularly report to the AUC Chairperson on progress

made in the implementation of the SDGEA;

Strengthen the position of ECOSOCC by changing its status from that of an Advisory body to a Consultative Organ of the Union while the PAP should be upgraded to become the legislative organ of the Union Government as proposed in the study on Union Government;

Support the proposal of the Chairperson of AUC on the need to strengthen the African Union Commission as the driving force of the Union Government;

Create greater opportunities for the empowerment of African women within the proposed Specialised Financial Institutions to be established under the Union Government;

Adopt the proposal to impose five US Dollars on each ticket bought for interstate travels in Africa and ten US Dollars on each tickets between Africa and other continents as viable funding mechanism for the Union Government;

Finally, ensure that the New Union Government strengthen all existing African institutions; making them accountable and responsive to the needs of African People and in reporting on their commitments to the African Women.



Summit delegates in session

On the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa ...

The Gender is My Agenda Network:

Notes with concern the non submission by several Member States of their baseline reports on the implementation of the provisions of the SDGEA and calls upon the remaining 40 Member States who have not submitted their reports to do so on time for the next Summit in January 2008;

Reiterate our earlier call to the Assembly to give prominence to Women's empowerment and gender equality as espoused in the SDGEA;

Ensure that all Member States create and maintain all necessary structures and adequate reportorial arrange-

ments, while adequate budgetary allocations are put in place for the implementation of the SDGEA;

Urge Member States that have not ratified and domesticated the Protocol to the Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa to do so immediately;

Also urge Member States to contribute to the establishment of the African Trust Fund for Women as agreed within the SDGEA;

Furthermore, we commit ourselves with our partners to ensure that this consultative process trickle down to our various constituencies under the Gender Is My Agenda campaign.

OTHER NEWS

SHORT COURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and the University for Peace (UPEACE) organised a short course on Human Rights and Transitional Justice, which took place from the 9-13th April 2007, at Laguna Beach in Mbodiène, Senegal. The course was attended by experts, researchers and university professors specialising in the field of gender and peace.

The short course brought together practitioners, researchers and people working with Regional and International Institutions and NGOs for the five day workshop which aimed to improve the participants skills and expertise on issues regarding gender and peace building.

The specific aims of this workshop were:

- To present and discuss specific aspects of gender and conflict management;
- To clarify terms, definitions and key concepts of human rights and transitional justice in Africa;
- To examine the gender dimension in transitional justice and violations of human rights during conflict and its transformation into peace;
- To empower women as actors of change;

- To examine the use of video and other training methods and materials;
- To share experiences and lessons learned;
- To create networks of people involved in gender issues specifically relating to peace.

Thirty participants from twenty African countries, including Sudan, Cameroon, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), attended the workshop which follows on from the first short course organised by FAS and UPEACE in July 2006. Both courses are intended to lead to the creation of a Master's degree programme in Gender and Peace-building at FAS's Pan-African Centre on Gender, Peace and Development.



Participants of the Short Course in session



International Secretariat staff

2007 TEAM BUILDING, GENEVA

The Staff at FAS's International Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, took part in the 2007 Team Building on 19th July, 2007. The meeting coincided with Mme Bineta Diop's visit to the Geneva office. Mme Diop led the Team Building, which included an orientation and overview of FAS's work for new staff, and case study exercises to train staff in event and office coordination. Several new ideas were also proposed, including the implementation of a new filing and database system for the office, as well as new directions for the upcoming 6th Ordinary Session of the Human Rights Council in September 2007.

Statement by APF-CSO

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2. Given the transformation and reconstruction agenda, G8 Member States must undertake to contribute resources for the Trust Fund for reconstruction and rehabilitation programs and ensure gender budgeting in reconstruction programmes and projects.
3. Take adequate measures to avoid the abuse of vulnerable groups and the disregard of human security in the exploitation of the extractive industries to ensure the avoidance of future conflict arising from improper extractive industry practices, and
4. That the APF adapt its strategic view and actions with the evolving security threats to maintain its relevance.

We call on the G8 and the APF to end the flow of illicit small arms and light weapons to conflict zones in Africa, and to ensure that all members of the international community are signatory to the International Arms Trade Treaty.

We call on the G8 to support the UN to continuously update, monitor and review the implementation and integration of the System-Wide Action Plan, first developed in 2005 and further report on progress made on an annual basis.

Furthermore, we call on the G8 to support and strengthen the AU protection forces and peace facilities by ensuring that financing is flexible and predictable, so that they can be responsive during armed conflict.