

## SOLIDARITY MISSION IN GUINEA



15th – 20th March 2010

With support from: UNOWA

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### PRESS RELEASE

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Under the leadership of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), a Pan-African organisation based in Dakar, Senegal, a Solidarity Mission was organised in support of the women of Guinea, particularly the victims of the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009 crisis. The Mission comprised of FAS, Pan-African Women Organisation (PAWO), Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa), West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP/WIPNET), Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO), a former member of the African Union (AU) Pan-African Parliament, and a representative of the Female Caucus of the Parliament of Sierra Leone. It was supported by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), UNIFEM, Africa Women Development Fund (AWDF), and the Urgent Action Fund.

The Mission which took place from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010 1) reviewed the impact of the crisis on women and girls and identified specific gaps, 2) made recommendations on concrete actions along the critical pillars of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, namely on a) the prevention of violence against women, b) protection and promotion of women's rights, c) prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, and the d) participation of women in decision making.

The Mission was received by the Minister of National Solidarity, Promotion of Women and Children, **Mrs. Nanfadima Magasouba**. Specific sessions were held with a) the Interim President of Guinea, **General Sekouba Konaté**, b) the Prime Minister, **Mr. Jean Marie Doré**, c) the Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Mr. Bakary Fofana**, d) the Minister for Justice, **Mr. Siba Loha Lamou**, e) Minister of Youth, **Mr Aliou Dioune**, f) Minister of Tourism, **Mrs. Mariama Sy Diallo**, g) Senior-ranking Officials, h) the Parliament, i) the United Nations Country Team coordinated by UNDP, j) the Embassies of France, Spain and United States of America, k) the representative of the European Union, l) leaders of political parties, m) civil society organisations, n) women's groups and leaders, o) youth groups, p) religious leaders, and q) direct victims of the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2009 crisis.

From these discussions, the Mission recognised that some initiatives have been taken by the women of Guinea, the Government of Guinea, the international community, nongovernmental organisations and other actors to address the short and urgent needs of victims including in the area of medical support and distribution of food and basic supplies. In addition, the Mission made other findings relating to the needs of the direct victims and on this basis calls for broader reforms to be addressed by the Government and other stakeholders in the short, medium and long term to prevent the recurrence of such violence. The main findings include:

- 1) The gross violation of women's bodies as a tool for political oppression; and alarming levels of trauma among victims.
- 2) Inadequate and uncoordinated support to especially the victims of rape and assault and the families of missing persons.
- 3) The lack of a long term comprehensive reparation plan for victims and of a victim support programme to guarantee access to justice.
- 4) Entrenched ethnic and political polarization and the absence of a national reconciliatory framework for the country in general.
- 5) Low institutional capacity of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Promotion of Women and Children; women's civil society organizations and youth groups to respond to their needs.
- 6) Lack of implementation of national policies for the protection of women and the lack of awareness of UNSCR 1325, 1820 and other legal instruments for the protection and promotion of women's rights.
- 7) Oppressive security institutions that perpetuate sexual and gender based violence against women.
- 8) Existence of religious, cultural and traditional barriers that perpetuate patriarchal systems at the expense of women's rights and dignity.
- 9) Underrepresentation of women in strategic leadership and decision making structures at all levels.

- 10) Fragmentation of Guinean Women's groups and civil society organisations across various divides.

Against the backdrop of these findings, the Mission recognizes the opportunity that has been created for positive change and makes specific recommendations in furtherance of this. These include:

1. Strengthening and expanding victims support programmes with a focus on psychosocial therapy, medical care, legal aid services, compensation, economic empowerment projects for women, capacity building on non-violence and reconciliation.
2. Individual women and women's groups should work together to resolve their differences and unify to promote a collective women's agenda.
3. Development of a national action plan to promote the implementation of UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 through a participatory and inclusive process.
4. Roll out a massive civic education programme with emphasis on the active participation of women and youths in the electoral process, political leadership and decision making at all levels, in collaboration with the media.
5. Strengthen sensitization and advocacy campaigns on gender and active non violence for women's groups; youth; security sector personnel; government officials; traditional, religious and political leaders; and reinvigorate early warning and early response mechanisms especially during the electoral period.
6. Policy review of constitutions, manifestoes and code of conduct of political parties and governance institutions to integrate quotas for women and gender mainstreaming. These policies should be implemented taking into consideration affirmative action and mentoring for young women and girls to ensure sustainability.
7. Deployment of ECOWAS, African Union and other election monitoring and observation mechanisms to ensure electoral security for women.
8. Reform of governance institutions including the security and justice sector as both a conflict prevention mechanism and a framework for enhancing the protection and participation of women.
9. Provide support to women and youth organisations to restore their dignity and improve their capacities to respond to the needs of community women and girls.
10. Provision of support to the Ministry in charge of gender and women's issues in human resource capacity development; logistics and finance, including in the development of a decentralised national gender architecture.
11. Transform existing political will into concrete political commitment and actions for women by the Government of Guinea, the private sector and the international community.

12. In respect of the above, the Mission appeals for the establishment of a Solidarity Fund as a quick impact measure. In this regard, the Government and international community should provide adequate human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of programmes and policies which promote human rights, democracy, peace and security, good governance, gender equality and women's empowerment while establishing effective coordination mechanisms to guarantee judicious and effective use of the funds.

The Mission is committed to advocating for the implementation of these recommendations and will in the immediate submit a detailed report to the United Nations; United Nations Office in West Africa and its Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; the UN Civil Society Advisory Group on UNSCR 1325; the AU-ECOWAS appointed Mediator on Guinea; the International Contact Group on Guinea; the African Union; ECOWAS; the Heads of States of the Mano River Union; the Guinean Authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

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