



Femmes Africa Solidarité

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Statement by Femmes Africa Solidarité at the 6th Session of the Human Rights Council, 24th September 2007

Thank you Mr. President,

I have just returned from the refugee camps of eastern Chad, with seven other women leaders representing eight different countries. Five of us are African. We went to see with our own eyes the dire situation of the victims of the Darfur conflict. We spent two days with the women in the camps of Gassire and Djabal who wanted to share their stories with us. Their stories of rape and mutilation were the most inhuman and degrading that we have ever heard.

We will now make their voices heard in the corridors of power as we travel the world in coming weeks to lobby governments for urgent action. Our voices will get their credibility from the voices of the brave women who told us their stories.

We are doing this because we want the killing and the raping in Chad and Darfur to stop. The stories of the women we met are a stain on the conscience of the world - like the story of Hawa, the woman who saw her only child beheaded in her arms. How can we sit by and let this happen over and over again?

The EU is planning to deploy an international military force into eastern Chad. We recommend the deployment include a women-only police force for the protection of women.

Despite its limited resources, the African Union has sent a significant number of troops to try to keep the peace in Darfur. We welcome the adoption of UNSCR 1769. However, in these months before the deployment of the hybrid force, women and children will **still** face violence. African governments have acted. But this is not enough. Let us not forget the international community's responsibility to protect.

A number of African leaders have been involved in the political discussions to bring all the parties to the negotiating table. We remind the Human Rights Council and the Government of Sudan that women **must** play a central role in the peace process, in accordance with UNSCR 1325. Women's voices must be heard at the negotiating table with the Government and the leaders of the rebel factions.

The Darfur-Chad crisis cannot be allowed to go on. More than 200,000 civilians have died. Two million people in Darfur have been driven from their homes. The world has been talking more than



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acting over the past four years.

We have seen the devastation caused by this conflict. It is sending shockwaves through the region. Eastern Chad is in danger of becoming "another Darfur." African governments and the international community must immediately take steps to solve the conflict.

Succeeding in Darfur will be a defining moment not only for the people of the region, but for Africa as a whole, and for the entire world. This conflict can be solved. But it requires political will, it requires resources, and it requires boldness to move out of this long-lasting inertia, towards a lasting solution.

Mr. President,

As you review the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, there must be no doubt about its renewal. Remember the women in Darfur and in Chad. We want them to know that at last their pain is heard and that their words are being considered at the highest political level.

Mr. President, we all thank you.

Bineta Diop, executive director, Femmes Africa Solidarité

Honorable Asha Hagi Elmi Amin, Member of Somalia Transitional Parliament

Dr Herta Deaubler-Gmelin, Member of German Parliament

Musimbi Kanyoro, secretary general, World YWCA

Angelique Kidjo, Benin, singer

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, distinguished fellow, Brookings Institute

Mary Robinson, president, Realising Rights

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