



Femmes Africa Solidarité

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Statement by Femmes Africa Solidarité at the 4th Session of the Human Rights Council – 16th March 2007

Thank you Mr President

We support the High Level Mission to Darfur and appreciate the inclusion of two women in its membership.

According to the report compiled by the Mission, the most pressing need in Darfur is the effective protection of the civilian population. Our networks in the field concur that the situation is deteriorating daily, with the killing of civilians by all parties involved. Of particular concern is the report's statement that 'rape and sexual violence have been widespread and systematic'.

We recognise the efforts of the Mission in interviewing groups of women in the Gaga and Beidjing camps, but we would further recommend that the areas surrounding the refugee and IDP camps be secured by withdrawing all armed groups.

The report recommends the deployment of the proposed UN/AU peacekeeping force. While we welcome the Continent's efforts to resolve African problems, the international community must assist the peacekeeping forces by providing them with financial, technical and personnel support. Security Council Resolutions relating to Darfur and the Sudan on the protection of civilians – and especially women – must be fully implemented.

The Mission report notes that a military solution to the conflict is not possible; only negotiations will succeed. We concur that 'Abuja Plus' type negotiations must include women and a gender perspective while women's networks currently working in Darfur must be supported.

If sustainable peace is to be found, the protagonists in the Darfur conflict must be made accountable. They must be brought to justice. As the report demonstrates, the Government of Sudan created several bodies to address violence against women. In reality access to justice remains limited, with few investigations of cases of rape, and even fewer prosecutions. The report recommends compensation

for victims. However, compensation alone is insufficient to help victims of sexual violence – they must receive additional counselling and support.

To achieve peace in Darfur, the root causes of the conflict must be addressed. The Mission singled out ‘longstanding economic marginalisation and underdevelopment’. The economic benefits of Sudan’s natural resources must be redistributed and women allowed access to credit, land, education and vocational training programmes.

We praise the report of the High Level Mission to Darfur for its recognition that women face specific challenges, requiring unique solutions. However, concrete actions must be taken to end the atrocities directed against civilians; enable humanitarian efforts; and include women in the peace process.

The manner in which the Council deals with the gender issue in Darfur will set an example to the rest of the world. This Council has the potential to be an effective and determined protector of women’s rights. Now the Council must act.

Thank you.

(Statement delivered by Mme Bineta Diop, Executive Director of Femmes Africa Solidarité)



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