



## Femmes Africa Solidarité

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### Statement by Femmes Africa Solidarité at the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council 13<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Thank you Mr President.

Femmes Africa Solidarité welcomes this thorough report by the group of experts, particularly in view of its emphasis on eradicating violence against women. We strongly urge the Sudanese Government to act upon its promises. Its ultimate responsibility is the protection of civilians and there can be no justification for disregarding this duty.

Our local networks in Sudan inform us that the security situation is still deteriorating. We have had reports of an increase in attacks - particularly car jackings - specifically targeting NGOs and UN agencies. We welcome the call for a police force to protect vulnerable groups and urge all parties to adhere to the latest agreement concerning the deployment of the hybrid force.

We welcome the report's focus on the protection of women. The use of sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war continues unabated. Rape IS widespread. Rape IS systematic. Despite the assurances of the Sudanese Government that these atrocities are being dealt with, perpetrators of these crimes remain beyond the reach of the law.

We strongly urge the Sudanese Government to act upon its promises and implement the various, and apparently numerous, mechanisms it has proposed. Greater efforts must be made to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of sexual violence; legal immunity laws must be dropped; and victims of such attacks must be given adequate medical assistance, counselling and compensation.

The Government should further demonstrate its commitment to protecting women by ratifying CEDAW and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

However, as the report states the 'mere existence' of agreements is 'insufficient to ensure the rights of the beneficiaries'. We therefore agree that these commitments should be given specific objectives, targets and time-frames.

Our networks report that there is growing frustration amongst the civilian population and IDPs over the lack of progress towards a comprehensive peace agreement. As the international community debates the relative merits of various proposals, the victims of this hesitation are the civilians, and especially the women and girls. They see only the international communities' lack of political direction and absence of strategic vision for the future peace plans. We must ensure that the peace agreements do not flounder and that they

involve the participation of all parties concerned, particularly women - as specified in UNSCR 1325.

Mr President

Whilst we appreciate the recommendations by the group of experts we feel that there have been enough agreements acknowledging the dire humanitarian crisis. There have been enough assurances that this situation will change and there have been enough recommendations. Now there must be action.



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