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20th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union

Opening Ceremony

10 July 2012

Address by Bineta Diop

Founder and Chair of the Executive Board of Femmes Africa Solidarité

- I would like to welcome everyone to the 20th GIMAC Pre-Summit Consultative meeting in the African Union, Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Indeed, there are many people to thank today who continue to support this network and to make our GIMAC meetings and advocacy a success. On behalf of the GIMAC network, I would like to recognize the presence of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and his team; the African Union Commission and Ms. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture; the African Union Women, Gender and Development Directorate (AUWGDD) and its Director, Ms. Litha Musiyimi-Ogana; UN Women and the Africa Regional Director, Ms. Letty Chiwara; the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Executive Secretary, Dr. Frannie Leautier; the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the Executive Secretary, Prof. Alphonse Ntumba Luaba.

And of course, our GIMAC members, partners and friends who have come from near and far, for us to deliberate together on where women stand today in Africa and to carry the message forward and act on it. I particularly welcome those who are joining us for the first time. We hope this will be the first of many GIMAC meetings for you.

We, African women, need this type of platform to review on where we stand, to strategize for the future, to partner and to network and to take a stance on common issues. In our recent work advocacy work, we have linked and stood in solidarity with our sisters in Zimbabwe; we have organized on peace and security during the 10th anniversary of Resolution 1325; we brought women to Durban to advocate for gender considerations during the climate change pre-consultations; and we are also looking at the issue of African women and agriculture. **Indeed, GIMAC is the right**

place to bring visibility to the issues of African women and to push these issues forward toward results!

- To that end, following our last GIMAC meeting in January when we talked about identifying GIMAC champions, I am happy to report that I just came from a visit to Liberia and that **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has agreed to become a GIMAC champion**. We are now engaged in finalizing the process with a Terms of Reference. She will also chair a panel on women in agriculture at the African Union, which will include President Kagame and also involve the ACBF.
- I also want to commend Mr. Janneh for his strong support to the GIMAC network. **He has followed through on the things that we asked him to do and I wanted to express the gratitude of the GIMAC network for his leadership at the ECA and for strengthening the gender agenda on the continent**. We now have a GIMAC Secretariat in Addis Ababa that is hosted at the ECA under the direction of Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director of the African Center for Gender and Social Development. Victoria Luyima of FAS is currently coordinating the office. We are also happy that they are helping us, along with Mo Ibrahim Foundation, to refine the SDGEA Index that will help us to better track and evaluate implementation. I thank Dr. Olumide Ajayi who has been working from the GIMAC side to move this process forward.
- **We need all these efforts and more if we are to be successful to address new and existing challenges** such as the situation in Mali where our sisters are suffering from the North and South divide and also Guinea-Bissau. We need to focus our attention on our sisters in North Africa going through democratic processes and to support them. We applaud them for their efforts to participate and we need to follow the process closely to see what the outcome is of that participation.
- On reporting on the SDGEA, since we started reporting in **2006 to 2011, 34 countries have at least submitted one report**. The report is based on the thematic SDGEA areas – human rights, economic empowerment, peace and security, health, education, governance – as well as the Maputo Protocol. **In 2011, 9 member states reported. That is, 17%**. This is up from 2010 when 4 countries reported. But lower than 2009 when 28 countries reported. Those that reported in 2011 were Equatorial Guinea, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Tanzania, Cameroun, Republic of

Congo, Seychelles, Namibia, Mauritius, Senegal. These figures are clearly too low and we need to examine what we as a network can do to foster a better response.

- On the other hand, we should celebrate our successes. **The parity principle was applied in force in last month's legislative elections in Senegal.** As such, the number of women MPs has increased by almost 100% - from 22% in 2007 to 42.66% of the 150 seats in 2012. We need to be vigilant too with the African Union to ensure that the parity principle is applied in the elections taking place this session.
- To strengthen our impact, we need to look at how we can operate even more stronger as a network, through the **setting up of a Steering Committee and better advocacy coordination at the local, national, regional and international levels.**
- So we have quite a task ahead of us. **Africa is the second fastest growing economy in the world, but poverty and inequality remain high and women are bearing the brunt of unequal policies, as well as experiencing the reversal of some of their rights, such as reproductive rights.**
- We need to remain vigilant and that is why we are here. We continue to push on. Because we care and because **we do this not only for our generations, but also for the generations of our children's children.** That they will live in a better, more equal world when the debate about the importance women's empowerment is no longer a debate but an accepted fact and reality.

Thank you.