

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) members welcome Dr. Dlamini-Zuma's election as Chairperson of the African Union



Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, South Africa's Home Affairs Minister, and a member of Femmes Africa Solidarité's (FAS) Advisory Board, was elected as the next chairperson of the African Union Commission on 15th July 2012 during the 19th Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma won with 37 votes of the 51 participating countries to become

the commission's first woman chairperson. She will serve as the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) for the next four years.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, 63, a medical doctor by training, has served as Minister for Health, Foreign Affairs, and Home Affairs in South Africa. Speaking to reporters before the vote, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma said that, if elected, she would spend her first few days in office determining how she can improve the AU. "...the contribution I would like to make is to look at the organization and see how we can strengthen it so that it works efficiently, effectively and better," she said. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma added that she was mindful of the fact that the AU faced many challenges and that carrying the hopes of more than one billion people could never be an easy task. "That is why I rely on the support of my sisters and brothers to make sure that all of us take this continent forward" she said.

In her acceptance speech, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma said, "My election is not a personal victory but a victory for the African continent in general and for women in particular.Women have to participate and take their rightful place in society so they can reach their full potential; because it is only if men and women reach their full potential that we as a continent shall reach our full potential".

FAS members and the GIMAC network are very proud of this election, as Dr. Dlamini-Zuma is highly qualified for the position, with a career track record that demonstrates her capacity to manage complex challenges and to lead the work of the African Union. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma has also been an active member of the African women's movement, helping bring about key AU policies to protect women's rights on the continent. In her role as Foreign Minister of South Africa, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma was dynamic in implementing the 2002 Gender Parity Principle once the Government of South Africa and that of Senegal had played a leadership role that resulted in the adaptation of the parity proposal as part of the AU Commission Statutes. Similarly, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma was an avid advocate

for the signing and ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and the adoption of the Solemn Declaration of Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA, 2004). Since the adoption of the SDGEA, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma has participated and supported the biannual meetings of GIMAC, held on the margins of the AU Heads of State and Government Summits.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma has been a member of the FAS Advisory Board since 2006, joining eminent African and international personalities in contributing to the promotion of gender, peace and security in Africa. She has participated in FAS initiatives and conferences, such as the one held in Bamako, Mali, in 2006 to celebrate the organization's tenth anniversary. She has also been active in other African and international initiatives to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma is therefore an inspiring example of the African women's movement. While Africa is still celebrating the first African woman Head of State, H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, and the latest arrival of H.E Joyce Banda as the President of Malawi, we hail the arrival of Dr. Dlamini-Zuma on the scene of African leaders at the highest level, an indicator that our struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment is not in vain.

As the Coordinator of GIMAC, FAS joins other GIMAC members and all African women in congratulating Dr. Dlamini-Zuma on attaining this high office. We commit ourselves to working with the women's movement and gender - sensitive men of Africa in supporting her as she develops a new agenda for the continent.