

## FAS celebrated the 50 Years Anniversary of the African Union in Geneva



(Ms. N. Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of African Union Commission - photo by AU)

The **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Union (AU)** was celebrated at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva on the **14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2013**, under the coordination of the Permanent Delegation of the AU. The event provided the opportunity to look back at the main achievements of the organization, to take into consideration the upcoming challenges, and to restate the faith in Pan African unity and the vision of the AU Commission Chairperson of *“a prosperous continent at peace with itself.*

The **first day** of the celebrations was dedicated to **activities organized by the civil society organizations** in Geneva, while the **second day** consisted of **high level debates** on themes with relevance for the African Union. A panel focused on **development in Africa** took place in the morning, with Mr. Michel Sidibe, Secretary General of UNAIDS, and Mr. Jean Ziegler, Expert on the Consultative Committee of the Un Human Rights Council, among the speakers.

**FAS President**, Ms. **Bineta Diop**, was invited to speak on the second panel of the day which focused on **good governance, peace and security in Africa**. This high level panel was chaired by H.E. Ms. **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**, Chairperson of the AU Commission and included keynote speakers such as H.E. Mr. **Olusengu Obasanjo**, former President of Nigeria, and H.E. Ms. **Navanethem Pillay**, the UN High Commissioner for Human Right.

Ms. Diop emphasized the importance of the **Founding Mothers** and **women’s movements** in the creation of the Organization of African Union 50 years ago, a cornerstone in the quest for freedom and prosperity of the continent. She also stressed that **human rights violation** remained the main challenge for Africa’s development today and reaffirmed **the crucial role of civil society** in building peace, human security and a sustainable development.

Successful examples of civil society mobilizations in the name of conflict prevention, as the creation of the **Situation Room** early-warning system during the 2012 Senegalese elections, were mentioned.

In her closing statements, Ms. Diop urged Members States to focus their efforts in achieving, in **10 years’ time, an African continent free from sexual violence against women and child soldiers, where land is equitably distributed to rural populations and particularly, women.**

Both days of celebrations ended on a **cultural** note, with the inauguration of an African Art Craft Exhibition, samples of African music and dance, and a gastronomic voyage into Africa, featuring traditional dishes from various African countries.