



femmes africa solidarité

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Dear FAS Members, Networks and Friends,

Inspired by our commitment to engendering the peace process in Africa, FAS has been engaged in several activities that have contributed to this vision during the past three months.

We have built on our advocacy at the highest levels and service to grassroots women. Wherever we work, FAS continues to demonstrate its enthusiasm to helping women in conflict areas.

Five major events have been planned during the early part of the year. In January, the Second Meeting of the Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur and the 13th Pre Summit Consultative Meetings on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union. In March, the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, UN Commission on the Status of Women and the UN Human Rights Council. At all five events, FAS intends to continue raising the voice of women in conflict areas.

We are glad to inform you about our efforts and achievements. We hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of FAS News.

Yours in solidarity,

Bineta Diop, Executive Director

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WORKING TOWARDS PEACE IN DARFUR

The Second Meeting of the Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur (SWOFOD) took place from 5th to 7th January 2009, at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Forum was an initiative of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) in partnership with Realizing Rights, African Women's Development Fund and Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), supported by the UK Department



Sudanese women singing at one of the Sessions

for International Development (DFID) and Norwegian Government.

It was an occasion to reaffirm and give power to women's voices, an opportunity to appeal for the mainstreaming of gender at the peace negotiation table by bringing Sudanese women on board and strengthening the consensus among Sudanese women for a common agenda for peace.

Over 100 Sudanese women and men, representing all the regions of Darfur, South Sudan, Khartoum and for the first time a group from the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) Camps attended the meeting. Furthermore UN agencies were represented in the form 3 people from UNAMID and 2 from UNIFEM. There was also representation from DFID, 3 people from the Khartoum office.

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www.fasngo.org

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EMINENT WOMEN DISCUSS IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325



Mme Diop (FAS Executive Director), Ms. Varbah Gayflor (Minister of Gender & Development of Liberia) and Ms. Elizabeth Rehn (Former Defense Minister of Finland), at work during the meeting

An Expert Group Meeting (EGM) was held in Monrovia, Liberia on the 15th of January 2009 with the aim of sharing experiences on the gains, gaps and future challenges on the implementation of UN SCR 1325 with a specific focus on women's participation in peace process, gender-responsive justice system and development of National Action Plans (NAPs).

It was organized by UNIFEM, FAS and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Liberia. It was a step towards the successful holding of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security that will take place next 7th - 8th March 2009 in Monrovia, Liberia.

The implementation process of the UN SCR 1325 has a number of shortcomings and gaps with regard to effective engendered monitoring mechanisms and adequate resources to achieve the desired outcomes.

Therefore an one-day EGM was needed. The meeting brought together key players such as Civil Society Organizations, NGOs, local representations, Liberian Women and Governments of Liberia, Finland and Iceland.



Ms. Olubanke King-Akerele, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Liberia

The main objective of the meeting was to review the current status of operations addressed by the UN SCR 1325 and identify the achievements, gaps and challenges. In this context, the annual UN Secretary General's reports on UN SCR 1325 and NGOs Working Groups on women, peace and security, represented the principal sources of information. Women's experiences in peace process gathered from different countries such as Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Columbia also contributed to the meeting outcomes.

The achievements stressed at the EGM include: the growing number of countries that have formulated NAPs on UN SCR 1325, the improving ability of UN, AU and EU peacekeeping forces to integrate gender advisors and units into their work and increased humanitarian interventions management from a gender equality viewpoint.

At the same time, several concerns emerged from the meeting: the number of women in leadership positions in international, regional and national security and peacekeeping institutions or in peace negotiation remains low. Furthermore, there is a lack of adequate judicial mechanisms to address abuses of women's rights during and after conflict, and a lack of strong monitoring and reporting instruments to ensure the implementation of UN SCR 1325.

The meeting represented also an important table to inform about good practices in implementing NAPs in UN SCR 1325 which followed important recommendations on how to attend to the areas of concern. Moreover, proposals for actions and timetable on UN SCR 1325 for Member States and other stakeholders, including women's organizations and civil society, were suggested.

Therefore, the EGM represented a great opportunity and a fertile ground to plan for the International Colloquium and thus give women a more effective power and influence on economics, climate change and sustainable development.



WORKING TOWARDS PEACE IN DARFUR

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Mrs. Robinson led a group of about 10 international delegates who came to show their solidarity to the Sudanese women. There was an African delegation of about 15 men and women mainly of the GIMAC.

After three days of discussions and consultations, a clear consensus was reached on the advocacy message as well as a strategy for the implementation of the Agenda for Peace.

As a result of the lively discussions, sharing of information and best practices among the women and men, a Constitution for the Forum and a Declaration on Darfur were adopted. The Sudanese group also elected members of the Governing Board.

The role of Sudanese women, in their will and hope for peace and security, need to be visible at national, regional and international level to better create a synergy and partnership between women of the Forum, UN agencies, the African Union and other partners. To this end, a press conference was held to increase awareness of the importance of the peace process in Darfur.

The 2nd SWOFOD was part of a bigger initiative started in September 2007 with the solidarity and fact-finding mission of eight prominent women leaders who visited the IDP and refugee camps in Eastern Chad. Ms. Mary Robinson, President of Realizing Rights, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mme Bineta Diop, Executive Director of FAS, were part of the mission group and together with six other eminent women, they engaged in a strong advocacy campaign on the impact the internal and regional conflict has had on the population, in particular on women and children.

Since 2008, a series of activities, orchestrated by FAS, have been held to continue engendering the peace process in Sudan, to consolidate the peace agenda on Darfur and to review the progress made in the capacity building and participation of the Sudanese women in peace negotiations.

The situation in Darfur is critical. The conflict has changed radically in the past year and not for the better. While there are many fewer deaths than during the high period of fighting in 2003-2004, the parties have split and the confrontations have multiplied. Violence is again increasing while access for humanitarian agencies has become more difficult, international peacekeeping is not yet effective and a political settlement remains far off.



Participants of the Second Sudanese Women's Forum on Darfur, January 5th-7th 2009

FAS APPOINTED TO UNDEF ADVISORY BOARD

On 5th January, Mme Diop, on behalf of FAS, was invited to be part of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund, one of the three main organs of UNDEF.

UNDEF is located in the United Nations Office for Partnership (UNOP) in New York and it is the Secretary-General's Trust Fund. The Secretary-General obtains advice on the work of UNDEF from an Advisory Board, composed of 19 members.

The previous Advisory Board concluded its work at the end of 2008 and the Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, appointed a new Advisory Board for 2009. It includes seven representatives from those Member States who have made the largest contributions to the Fund (United States, India, Japan, Qatar, Australia, Germany and France); six representatives from Member States selected by the Secretary-General to reflect diverse geographical representation (Botswana, Lebanon, Mongolia, Panama, Slovenia as well as Trinidad and Tobago); four personal representative of the Secretary-General (Prof. Michael Doyle of Columbia University, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, former Finance Minister of Afghanistan, Ms. Sanam Anderlini affiliated with the MIT Center for International Studies and Mr. Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the UN Office for Partnerships); and two representatives from the international civil society organizations. In this latter context, in the behalf of Femmes African Solidarité, Mme Diop will join the membership of the Advisory Board for 2009.

The main purpose of the Advisory Board is to provide policy guidance for the development of programmes and funding guidelines, and to recommend funding proposals for approval by the Secretary-General. The Board is expected to meet in New York, three or four times during 2009 and the first meeting for this Third Board was planned for 28th January for a briefing on UNDEF's work.



FOUR COUNTRIES SHORTLISTED FOR 2009 GENDER AWARD

Building on the positive feedback of the two first editions, FAS and its PanAfrican Centre for Gender, Peace and Development, in conjunction with its partners, will hold the 3rd African Gender Forum and Award (AGFA) in 2009. The aspirant countries for 2009 are Botswana, Liberia, Mozambique and Tanzania.

The Selection Committee Members met on 29th January in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the margins of the 13th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU, to review the nominated countries performance, elect the 2009 Award Recipient, and discuss the 2009 Forum theme.

The African Gender Award is established in order to recognize and reward African Leaders who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women as outlined in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality In Africa (SDGEA) adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Third Ordinary Session of the African Union in Addis Ababa in July 2004.

The Selection Committee is composed of a team of FAS members and partners, independent experts, outstanding women and representatives from civil society, the private sector and African women networks.

Call for Nominations can be proposed by Governments, CSOs, Private Sector members, International Organizations, for a period of three months.

The past winners are South Africa and Senegal in 2005 and Rwanda in 2007.



Selection Committee at work – Ms. Thelma Awori, Hon. Saida Agrebi, Ms. Soyata Maiga



Selection Committee at work – Ms. Yetunde Teriba, Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo and Ms. Amany Asfour

MALARIA PROJECT ON FAS WEB-SITE

A new link has been created on FAS web-site about “Gender, Conflict and Malaria in selected African countries” project. It is a way further for FAS to stress its will and dedication on gender issues and to inform Partners, Network and public in general about its work and projects.

The new page points out FAS and Roll Back Malaria’s collaboration aiming to produce results and hopes for an improved situation in Africa.

The activities of the project focus on six African countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. With this programme FAS intends to strengthen the "Global Gender and Malaria Network" and specifically its competencies on gender mainstreaming in malaria control programmes during conflict situations in the African continent. Moreover, it will sensitize decision makers at all levels in order to mainstream gender into malaria policies and create an enabling environment so that they can respond appropriately to community concerns. Lastly, it will raise awareness at all levels on Gender, Conflict and Malaria creating a critical mass of supporters. It will strengthen their competency as agents and advocates of change as well as reinforcing the general ownership of gender analysis in malaria control programmes, especially in conflict situation, thus ensuring future sustainability.

Women vulnerability is enhanced in conflict situation where women are systematically refused their rights, as human and as women. There are gender aspects to most conflict situation in which women must cope with reproductive health problems, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the physical and mental trauma of sexual violence. During an emergency situation, women also need to face environmental dangers and problems of malnutrition and stress-related conditions, all circumstances enhancing the common health problems, malaria included.

Despite this, women’s voices are not heard in the fight against malaria, and there is little understanding of the gender aspects of malaria control. The international community needs to direct more attention towards fighting malaria with a gender approach in order to save lives and promote development.

Here, the FAS’s purpose to inform on its project to better fight malaria.



BEST PRACTICE BOOKLET LAUNCHED AT 13TH PRE-SUMMIT

The 13th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the African Union took place at the UNECA Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 27th to 28th January 2009, on the margins of the Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU).

The meeting expected to review new strategies of advocacy for effective gender parity policies and practice, to identify future challenges and to establish the way forward in support of implementing the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. It was organized by the GIMAC network, coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and co-organized with UNECA Africa Center for Gender and Social Development, with the support of OSIWA, AWDF, Government of Finland and DFID.

A central activity was the launch of the *Best Practice Booklet on Gender Mainstreaming in Africa*, a study commissioned by FAS on gender best practices with the support of ECA, OSIWA, AWDF, Government of Finland and DFID. The launch, hosted by AUC, was chaired by Hon. Jean Ping, AUC Chairperson, with the effective participation of Ms Gertrude Mongella (President of the Pan African Parliament), Ms Olubanke King-Akerele (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia), Prof. Ibrahim Kane (AU Advocacy Director and OSIWA representative), Ms Thokozile Ruzvidzo (African Center for Gender and Social Development, UNECA), Ms Litha Musyini-Ogana (Director of Women, Gender and Development Directorate) and the GIMAC Members.

The aim of the book is to highline the African woman's renaissance. Several facts demonstrate the African progress such us, in 2006, its first female president, H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and, across the continent, the growing numbers of women in leadership positions. Women are also claiming their place in other sectors, private and business world, as well as the security sectors. Women have been critical movers in this change and in this study the experience of the African women's movement and network for peace is documented with the purpose to share experience, disseminate strategies and best practices, provide historical insights and assist the successor generations in keeping the torch alive.

Therefore, the launch of booklet was an occasion to gather several and different actors and take awareness on the role that women had, have and will have in the political, economic and social field.

The 13th Pre-Summit discussed several issues such as Gender and Reproductive Health and Gender Equality and the Effectiveness of Aid in Africa. The presentation of "Decent Work" by the International Labor Organization and the followed discussion on equality on employment were also organized. A additional topic discussed concern the AU Summit Theme on Infrastructure Development in Africa with Emphasis on Transport, Energy and Investment, where the AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim called upon the AU and Member States to make deliberate effort to build up a gender-driven framework for infrastructural development in terms of design, funding and impact on the lives of African women.



Launch of the Booklet. From left: Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Ms. Gertrude Mongella, Hon. Jean Ping and Ms. Olubanke King-Akerele



Participants at the 13th Pre-Summit with H.E. Graça Machel

Furthermore, new topics emerged to consider at this 13th Pre-Summit, notably the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820, passed in June 2008, concerning the ongoing violence against women, and the links between Resolution 1820 and Resolution 1325. It was also important to raise awareness among women's grassroots organizations at the national, sub-regional and regional level and to reinforce the commitment of civil society member of the Campaign to participate in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGEA.

In conclusion, the Summit emphasized that significant developments have been done with respect to gender issues, and AU's decisions and declarations have moved forward the gender agenda, however much work remains to achieve female empowerment and gender mainstreaming.



A TROPHY FOR FAS COMMUNITY ACTION

On 15th November 2008, in Paris, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Panafrican monthly magazine, a “Community Action Trophy” was awarded to Mme Diop for her achievements and efforts in Africa.

The Golden Jubilee evening represented an important goal for the magazine, started months earlier with the publication of a series of ten special editions, evoking the memory of the last half-century African excellent figures in various fields. The intention has been to emphasize the historical evolution of the magazine and the role it had on telling the history during the last 50 years.



Mme Diop receiving the Community Action Trophy

The celebration evening was both a culmination and, at the same time, a fresh start for the magazine with the will to stress the vocation and the endeavour of distinguished personalities of Africa. Therefore, six different trophies honoured six African representatives. Together with FAS Executive Director, a Trophy of Honour was given to the Mali Former Ministry of Culture, Ms Aminata Dramane Traoré; the Political Action Trophy to Mr Jean Ping, President of AU Commission; the Nord-South Solidarity Trophy to Mr Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil, President of Cordination Sud; the Cultural Influence Trophy to the Angola singer Bonga; and finally, the Innovative Private Enterprise Trophy was given to Mr Claude Grunitzky, owner of Trace Group.

The 50 years old magazine is guided by a special woman native of Cameroon, Ms Marie-Roger Biloa, and editor in chief from 1991. When she assumed complete ownership in 1991, the magazine’s circulation totalled 40,000 copies. By 1998, it sold 65,000 copies before reaching its current circulation of more than 100,000 copies. Nowadays the magazine is evolving and being closer to its readers and its durability and progresses have been welcomed by Friends of Africa International meeting for the reached goal.

It was an honour for Mme Diop to be part of this 50th anniversary of a newspaper that is able to connect the African people and able to accompany the development of Africa. FAS congratulates also with the exemplary work of Ms Biloa, a lady who embodies a model of pride and talent for African women.

FAS WELCOMES NEW STAFF

FAS is pleased to welcome new members of staff. In the Geneva office, four new interns arrived: Ms. Elisa Rossi for Information and Communication; Ms. Beatrijs L. Loor for Networking and Outreach; Ms. Eskedar A. Bekele for Partnership and Networking; and finally Ms. Emanuela Alongi for Monitoring and Evaluation.



FAS Staff, Geneva office

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

From 1996, FAS has been engaged in fostering and promoting African women’s voices at international and African for a. Consequently, the date 8th March represents a further opportunity to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires the active participation, equality and development of women. It is also a way to state that violence against women has not be tolerated and to encourage a jointly partnership among men and women to create more equal and peaceful societies.

This special day was celebrated and commemorated on 6th March by a joint UN/CONGO NGO Committee on the Status of Women event in Geneva. FAS, as member of CONGO, participated in the event. It was also the first time the day was honoured with NGOs participation at the Palais Des Nations. With the presence of Ms. Conchita Poncini, President of the NGO CSW, the meeting discussed and analysed the role of women in the financial crisis and its impact on them.



43RD CEDAW SESSION

The 43rd Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) took place from 19 January to 6 February 2009 at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

The body, consists of 23 independent experts on women's rights from around the world, intended to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979.

Countries who have become party to the treaty (States parties) - are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. The eight countries that presented their reports were: Armenia, Cameroon, Dominica, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Rwanda. During its sessions the Committee considered each State party report and addressed its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations.

Working in the Great Lakes area, Rwanda is a focus country for FAS. Among others, FAS programmes in Rwanda concern the national action plans on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the Gender, Conflict and Malaria Project.

Hon. Jeanne D'Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Gender and the Promotion of the Family of Rwanda, presented the report. She pointed out that her country had had many ups and downs but it had a vision. Through inclusive policies, politics and strategies, the Government was committed to developing women and empowering women's rights. All this was part of a vision of a united democratic and prosperous Rwanda. Her country was a place where women and men, girls and boys enjoyed the same rights.

CEDAW represents a legal instrument to fight discrimination and other relevant human right treaties. A lot of progress has been achieved, but more efforts are needed from all stakeholders on the implementation of the Convention.

UPCOMING EVENTS

53RD UN CSW

The 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women takes place at the UN Headquarters in New York from 2nd to 13th March 2009.

The session is attended by representatives of Member States, UN entities and of ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and all together they evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

The main theme of the next session is "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS". Furthermore, an interactive dialogue is going to evaluate progress of the implementation of the agreed conclusions "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels" adopted at the 50th session of CSW.

To discuss the issue of the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, FAS has planned a series of parallel events from March 1st to 7th 2009, inviting guests from Sudan and the Sudanese Diaspora to discuss their difficulties.

The four panels has being organized around HIV/AIDS, violence against women in conflict and post conflict zones and the role of men to address this issue and fight against. The activities aim to achieve an effective collaboration between the different fieldwork actors - UN agencies, civil society organisations and Governments.

10TH SESSION OF THE HRC

The 10th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) will take place from 2nd to 27th March 2009 in Geneva.

The inter-governmental body within the UN system, made up of 47 States, will give its further support for the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.

A thick and engrossed agenda will commit the members. The annual report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General will be reviewed. A Panel discussion on the right to food, water and housing and the annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child have been planned. Furthermore, there will be the Universal Periodic Review of several countries, among them African countries such as Burkina FAS, Botswana, Burundi and Cape Verde. Finally, the Council will attend debates on the rights of persons with disabilities on minorities' issues.

On this occasion, FAS is organizing parallel events from March 20th to 27th, with the participation of Sudanese women and NGOs. Two panels are being organized: on Monday 23rd March the panel is titled "A step forward on the Darfuri women's Road to Peace", to provide an opportunity for Sudanese women to share their experiences on the progress made on the Road to Peace in Darfur; and on Tuesday, March 24th, a review of the progress in implementation of UN SCR 1325 will be done by women from the Great Lakes Region.

Furthermore, a series of training on UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, HRC and AU are planned.