



femmes africa solidarité

Dear FAS Members, Networks and Friends,

After the success of Addis Ababa, where the Gender is My Agenda campaign members presented their first reports on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration, FAS is looking forward to a year of further promoting the cause of African women. We are particularly look forward to cementing our partnership with the Government of Finland, whose grant will allow us to implement vital projects.

Most importantly, in the next few weeks, the **UN Human Rights Council** will be meeting in Geneva and FAS hopes to hold two panels. Please see page 4 for details. FAS will also be launching a **new website** in the coming weeks.

With very best wishes,

Mme Bineta Diop

FAS RECEIVES FUNDING FROM FINLAND TO IMPLEMENT SCR 1325 IN AFRICA

Perhaps the most the exciting news of the past few months, has been the signing of a contract between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for Finland and FAS. This was the biggest grant FAS has ever received, and is sufficient to cover the implementation of projects in the Great Lakes region for the next three years.

In order to implement Security Council Resolution 1325, the grant will cover specific projects aiming to implement, and elaborate National Action Plans (NAPs) which are currently lacking in countries in West Africa. The adoption of NAPs, and the recognition of the grave situation of women in Africa, will demonstrate that these countries, and their governments, are committed to respecting women's legal and human rights. In turn, the successful implementation of a NAP depends heavily on the following: advocacy; capacity building; networking; and the improvement in the means of communication in order to raise awareness and knowledge of the Resolution.

FAS will work closely with different African women's networks, NGOs, and representatives of the UN and governments, to ensure that the projects in each individual country are appropriately adapted to the specific conditions of the area; this will ensure that the projects are sustainable and effective.

The most important aims of the projects are:

- To implement NAPs on SCR 1325 in the selected countries;
- To provide women with the competencies to participate in the formulation and implementation of the projects;
- To raise awareness of SCR 1325 at a local and national level through the use of media and education;
- To allow grassroots advocacy to reach the policy level;
- To promote and sustain gender equality and equal representation of women in decision-making processes at all levels.



Ambassador Vesa Himanen and Mme Bineta Diop sign the contract at the Finnish Consulate in Geneva

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**International Secretariat
8 Rue du Vieux-Billard
P.O. Box 5037
1211 Geneva 11
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 328 80 50
Fax: +41 22 328 80 52
Email: info@fasngo.org**

**Regional Office for Africa
Stèle Mermoz Immeuble
Rose,
Appt. No. 31C,
P.O. Box 45077 Fann,
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +1 221 860 20 48
Fax: +1 221 860 20 47
Email: fas-ong@sentoo.sn**

**New York Liaison Office
United Nations Liaison
Office
777 United Nations Plaza
5th Floor
New York,
New York 10017
Tel: +1 212 687-1369
Fax: +1 212 661-4188
Email: infony@fasngo.org**

www.fasngo.org



CONTACT:

**Catherine Cowley
Information and Communica-
tion
Femmes Africa Solidarité
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: + 41 22 328 80 50
Fax: +41 22 328 80 52
Email:
communication@fasngo.org**



FIRST REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLEMN DECLARATION ADDIS ABABA JANUARY 2007

As part of the ongoing 'Gender is My Agenda Campaign,' aiming to mainstream gender in the African Union (AU), Femmes Africa Solidarité and women's civil society networks in Africa organized the 9th AU Pre-Summit Consultative meeting which took place in January in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting was the 9th in a series of consultative meetings of civil society networks concerned with gender issues and the promotion of women's human rights in Africa.

The key objective of this year's meeting was for civil society members of the campaign to evaluate and report on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) through the launching of their shadow reports.



Members of the 'Gender is My Agenda' Campaign at the Addis Conference

Organizers of the 'Gender is My Agenda Campaign' defined thematic focal points addressing the various aspects of the SDGEA, asking members of civil society to evaluate and report on the progress of each theme through the presentation of a shadow report. Some of the themes addressed were: governance; peace and security; human rights; health; education; and economic empowerment.

The meeting was intended to be an opportunity to build upon the successes of the previous 8th consultative meeting which took place June 2006 in Banjul with the official launch of the 'Gender is My Agenda Campaign' and the adoption of the Banjul Declaration. The meeting in Addis Ababa aimed to continue facilitating a dialogue amongst civil society members and provide a forum in which to revise future strategies on gender mainstreaming.

THE AFRICAN UNION'S DECISION ON THE REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLEMN DECLARATION ON GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA (DOC. EX.CL/306 (X))

The Assembly:

TAKES NOTE of the Reports and presentation on the Implementation of the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA);

CONGRATULATES Member States that have so far submitted their baseline reports, namely: Algeria, Burundi, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia;

APPEALS to Member States that are yet to submit their baseline reports to urgently submit these reports, for the AU to have a base upon which to build on the progress made;

CALLS ON Member States to implement all the commitments made in the SDGEA;

ALSO CALLS upon the Commission to assist Member States in the process of reporting on the Solemn Declaration, and take necessary steps in this direction;

REQUESTS Member States to adopt the content of the SDGEA as the framework for the acceleration of the implementation of the existing instruments and platform for gender equality at the national level, in order to maximize the implementation of the SDGEA.

INVITES the RECs, development partners, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to work closely with the AU and Member States in the implementation of the Solemn Declaration and report on progress made in this endeavour;

REQUESTS the Commission to urgently organise a continental conference on Economic Empowerment of African Women in order to articulate strategies to elevate the economic status of African women, including the establishment of the African Trust Fund for Women;

ALSO APPEALS to Member States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify/ accede to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.





PAUL KAGAME OF RWANDA: RECIPIENT OF THE 2007 AFRICAN GENDER AWARD

ADDIS ABABA, JANUARY 2007

In January, the Selection Committee for the African Gender Award, elected the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Paul Kagamé to be this year's recipient. The meeting was presided by the President of the Pan-African Parliament, Mme. Gertrude Mongella.

The jury's choice was guided by specific criteria designed to monitor the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equity in Africa. President Paul Kagamé has shown a huge commitment to promoting women's rights in his country.

Since the 1994 genocide, Rwanda has been distinguished for its integration of women in the reconstruction process, the fight against gender-based violence, the protection of the rights of women and girls, women's rights to economic development and to own property, as well as the rights of women and girls to equal education, particularly in rural zones.

Rwanda is the only country in the world that can count 48% of women deputies in their national Parliament, as well as total gender parity in the attribution of teaching positions in higher education and in the country's judicial system.

"Compared to other countries that reached the final stage of the competition, Rwanda is by far the country with the best performance in the promotion and protection of the rights of women," stated the President of the jury, Gertrude Mongella.

President Paul Kagamé will receive the African Gender Award in May in Dakar, where the Award was created by the Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development (PACGPD) and Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS). The first African Gender Award was awarded in May 2005 to President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.



Rosalie Lo of FAS with H.E President Kagamé



Selection Committee with H.E President Kagamé

Selection Committee for the African Gender Award visits Rwanda

The Selection Committee for the African Gender Award made a visit to Rwanda in February to offer its personal congratulations to President Kagamé for being elected the recipient of the African Gender Award for 2007. It was also a crucial opportunity to meet grassroots women's organisations, and private sector members, whose achievements in furthering women's rights will also be celebrated at the African Gender Award Ceremony, scheduled to take place in May in Dakar.

The visit also coincided with the Women Parliamentarians International Conference which was held in Kigali, and was opened by President Kagamé himself. During the Conference entitled 'Gender, National Building and Role of Parliaments' President Kagamé urged Africa, and indeed the international community, to fully utilise the talents and potential of women, as 'it is painfully evident that gender inequality constrains growth and poverty reduction'. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia also commended the efforts Rwanda has made to ensure that women contribute to the development of the country.

Other notable participants included Cherie Booth QC, wife of UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who particularly commended the activities and progress made by the Gacaca courts to restore justice after the Genocide. She also called for the protection of women, who had been abused during the Genocide, to ensure that they felt more comfortable talking about what they went through.



Mme Kagamé, Cherie Booth and Gertrude Mongella



OTHER NEWS

PARIS: CHILD SOLDIERS

In February, the French government and UNICEF organised a conference of Non-Government Organisations, government representatives and inter-government groups, to reaffirm the importance of confronting and resolving the issue of child soldiers.

In ten years the number of child soldiers deployed has remained at the same level of approximately 250,000. Of these one third are girls, although in some areas of conflict they comprise up to 40% of the children recruited. Girls are especially vulnerable both during and after armed conflict. Many, who return from armed conflict, possibly with a child, are not portrayed as victims in the receiving communities; often they are ostracised and made to feel impure, whilst little is done to re-educate or re-train them.

The 'Paris Principles', which were ratified at the conference, seek to encourage programs which will foster a more protective environment and provide the girls with real socio-economic opportunities, allowing them to generate their own income.



Publication of 'Mémoire Blessée: Algérie, 1954' — de Mohamed Sahnoun

This book not only denounces military torture and the indescribable and gratuitous suffering that some men inflicted on their fellow creatures, during the war in Algeria, but is

also the deeply moving story of a magnificent and courageous solidarity. This story attests to our responsibility to act with humanity in order to protect the most disadvantaged.

Mohamed Sahnoun is a high ranking Algerian diplomat, who has served as Special Advisor to Secretary General Kofi Annan of the UN, and as Under-Secretary for the Organisation of African Unity. Ambassador Sahnoun serves on FAS' Advisory Board; he will be signing copies of his book at the launch of FAS' new website, details of which will be announced shortly.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW YORK: COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York is currently in session, with the leading theme of the event entitled: **'The Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child'**. Discussions will be held from the 26th February to the 9th March.

FAS is part of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, a coalition of NGOs working for women's rights and based in New York. The Working Group has organised a workshop on Security Council Resolution 1325 and girl soldiers. FAS has also organised several discussions, including 'Health and Empowerment: The Impact of HIV/Aids and Genital mutilation' and 'The girl-child within UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and African instruments'.



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL TO HOLD ITS 4TH SESSION

The Human Rights Council will be holding its 4th session, in Geneva, from the 12th March to the 5th April. The planned sessions include panels on Violence against Women, and reports from Burundi, DRC and Liberia; all of which are focus areas for FAS.

Given that the High Level Mission to Darfur will also be presenting its report to the Council, this session will offer a special opportunity for lobbying for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325.

It will also be an important forum for advocating on gender issues in conflict situations in general. FAS is planning to organize two panels of discussion: one on violence against women in conflict zones, and another on violence against children.

- 4 A training session on Human Rights Instruments and the UN is also planned to take place.

MADRID: AFRICA 'WOMEN FOR A BETTER WORLD'

An International meeting will be taking place in Madrid from the 7th –8th March to discuss the role of women in development in Africa. 250 African women from 41 countries will be present, and it is hoped that the event will cement networks between African women's networks, and Spain.

Among the speakers will be Mme Graça Machel, M. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the President of Spain, and Mme Wangari Maathai, the 2004 recipient of the Nobel Prize.

Under discussion will be 'Peace and Democracy', 'Empowerment and the Rights of Women', and 'Education of Girls in Africa'.

