



FEMMES AFRICA SOLIDARITÉ

FAS NEWS

A SUMMER OF CONFERENCES, COURSES AND CHANGES

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Dear FAS Members, Partners and Friends,

As summer draws to a close, Femmes Africa Solidarite would like to take this opportunity to reflect on and review our activities over the past few months.

It has certainly been a busy and productive summer and we look forward to sharing the results of our conferences, projects and initiatives with you.

We hope this issue of FAS News will keep you up-to-date and informed, and as always, we look forward to your continued feedback and participation in our efforts to engender the peace process in Africa.

With best wishes,

Bineta Diop
FAS Executive Director



Mme Bineta Diop

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF WOMEN'S PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA

BAMAKO, MALI
JUNE 11th – 15th, 2006

One of the most significant events of the past few months has been the successful completion of FAS's ten year anniversary conference entitled, "**Gender, Peace and Security in Africa: Capitalizing on Ten Years of Women's Experience**" from June 11-15 in Bamako, Mali.

The event was hosted by H.E. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of Mali, and attended by a number of distinguished guests including H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia; Mrs. Toure Lobbo Traore, first lady of Mali; Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs, South Africa; Ms. Aminata Tall, Minister of State, Senegal; and Mrs. Ruth Sando Perry, former Head of State, Liberia.

The conference was an opportunity to unite African women working for peace and to review ten years of activities in order to further enhance the participation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa.

Further, the conference provided an avenue in which to identify the best practices of female peace leaders and to define strategies for future action. Participants evaluated successes and failures, shared knowledge about increasing the role of women in conflict resolution and peace reconstruction, and defined new orientations for the future of the women's peace movement.

One of the highlights of the conference was the evening gala and presentation of the Tombouctou Award. Several eminent personalities, including the President of Mali,

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received this distinction in recognition of their contributions towards the pursuit of peace and stability in Africa. The selection of President Toumani Touré as a recipient of the Tombouctou Award, recognizes the wisdom and resolve of Malians in ending the “Rebellion of Touareg” conflict on March 17th, 1996. As such, the location of the conference in Mali and the award logo entitled “the Flame of Tombouctou” were chosen to symbolize the efforts of the Malian people towards peace and reconciliation.

The Bamako conference also provided a forum for unveiling the results of a study commissioned by FAS of its activities over the past ten years. The study was carried out between January and February, 2006 by four external consultants with an aim to examine FAS’s contributions to the women’s peace movement thus far. The lessons learned from this study will allow FAS to review its programs in order to create a clearer picture of the processes of prevention and peacebuilding currently in place, and to arrive at better strategies and approaches in the future.

In addition to the launch of the study, the conference was also an opportunity to discuss new tools for action, including the creation of a Leadership Bank of African Women, and case studies and instruments of monitoring and evaluation that will now be available as a resource for women invested in promoting peace and stability on the continent.

After examining the results of the ten year study, members and networks of FAS enshrined the “Bamako Commitment” in which they made several commitments for the future of the women’s peace movement. Among them, were the imperatives to: foster knowledge in youth to assume the legacy of leadership for peace; advocate for implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325; reinforce traditional mechanisms for conflict management rooted in African social values, and contribute to the transformation of the Pan-African Organization of Women.



Bamako Commitment

We, members of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and the network of African women, meeting in Bamako for the Conference on Gender, Peace, and Security in Africa: Capitalizing on 10 years of women’s experience, from 12 to 14 June 2006, under the Presidency of H.E. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, and in the presence of H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia as special guest, H.E. Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa and Her Excellency Ms Aminata Tall, Minister of State of the Republic of Senegal, to celebrate the ten years of FAS,

After having examined the results of the study of FAS on the *Women’s Movement for Peace and Security in Africa: 10 years of Practice* as well as other specific initiatives on conflict management in Africa,

Make the following commitments:

Take concrete measures with a view to reinforcing the links between women and African women’s organizations in order to realize a true pact of solidarity, aimed at promoting peace and security in Africa and around the world;

Build the capacity of women’s leadership that can fully promote the aspirations of women and women’s active participation in decision-making mechanisms and promote, through the transfer of values and knowledge, the gradual participation of children and youth in the democratic process with a view to ensuring their enlightened citizenship and future leadership;

Consolidate the partnership for action that moves forward the gender perspective in all actions of mobilization in favor of peace, security and development by promoting, through education, the establishment of a culture of peace and respect for human rights;

Advocate for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), in particular working to ensure that every country adopt a National Plan of Action on peace and security as well as for the Solemn Declaration made by the Heads of States of the African Union on gender equality and the Protocol on Women’s Rights in Africa;

Ensure the genuine mobilization by States and the international community for the implementation and monitoring of post-conflict reconstruction programmes that take into account the concerns of women and the human security dimension;

Reinforce traditional mechanisms for conflict management inspired by African social values of dialogue, moderation, cooperation, consensus, solidarity and sharing;

Contribute to the processes of transformation of the Pan-African Organization of women with a view to creating a widespread Pan-African Women’s Movement, capable of realizing the aspirations of African populations in general and women in particular.

FIGHTING TO PUT GENDER ON THE AGENDA

AU PRE-SUMMIT MEETING, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA

Two years after the adoption of the Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) FAS is still pushing to have gender truly considered on the African Union (AU) Agenda.

In an effort to push forward women's effective participation in the AU and its Member States, network members of the 'Gender is my Agenda' campaign, coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) in partnership with ACDHRS, held the 8th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU on 26-27, 2006 in Banjul, Gambia facilitated by Her Excellency Issau Ms Isatou Njie Saïdy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia.

The meeting was the 8th in a series of Pre-Summit consultations of civil society networks concerned with holding Heads of State accountable in following through with their commitments to the SDGEA. Specifically, the SDGEA calls for the following: a continued implementation of gender parity in the AU and at the national level; the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and the protection of women against violence and discrimination.

At the meeting, thematic and sub-regional focal points of the "Gender is my Agenda" campaign presented reports on the status of women in Africa, with particular emphasis on the areas of health, education, economic empowerment, human rights, peace and security, and governance. Participants also engaged in dialogue over how best to proceed with the campaign and established guidelines and recommendations for future reporting on the SDGEA.

At the meeting, participants recognized with appreciation the following achievements: The holding of the first conference of Ministers responsible for Gender and Women's Affairs in Africa; The Establishment of the African Union Women's Committee; The entry into force of the Protocol of the Rights of Women in Africa in November 2005; The application of the parity principle in the commission in the AU including the Commission on Human and People's Rights and the ECOSOCC; The steps taken by the AU to investigate the allegations of sexual abuse by AU peace-keeping force in Darfur.

However, participants also called attention to several unfulfilled commitments two years after the adoption of the SDGEA. First, and most troubling perhaps, is that although AU Heads of State made a commitment to report annually on the progress made in mainstreaming gender into their activities, **NO such reports have yet been presented.** In addition, the following commitments have also yet to be realized: the establishment of an African Trust Fund for Women; the application of the parity principle in the nomination of judges the Africa Court on Human Rights; a strategy to address the ongoing violence and sexual abuse of women and the recruitment of child soldiers.

In light of both the successes and shortcomings, participants made recommendations on the way forward. The final report with recommendations is still in the processes of being drafted; however recommendations will touch on the themes of expanding the application of gender parity in all AU organs.

Concluding with the creation of the Banjul Call for Action, participants put forth the following recommendations: the Pan African Parliament (PAP) Protocol should be amended to allow for at least 2 women representatives out of the five; the AU should work to simplify and harmonize systems of reporting by Member States; integrate "life skills" education into school curricula; each country should put into place a system that ensures women's access to health care; ensure women's access to land and to resources or profits obtained from extractive industries; establish a group of women mediators and peacebuilders at all levels, including the grassroots.

FINDING THE TOOLS TO NEGOTIATE PEACE

FAS and University for Peace host Short Course on Gender and Peacebuilding

Day 1

Day 2

This Tuesday, July 18th, Resolution 1325 was at the centre of a stimulating discussion and debate following the much applauded speech of Ms. Ecoma Alaga, gender expert, and member of the NGO, Wipnet.

In reference to the opportunities and challenges of Resolution 1325, Ms Ecoma Alaga, in her presentation, stressed the importance of establishing a Gender Unit in United Nations missions; the appointment of women at stations of responsibility in the United Nations system overall; the important work of the Working Group on Peace in New York; and the translation of the Resolution into several different languages. In closing, Ms Ecoma Alaga indicated that the Resolution was not well known by women, and that efforts should be made to address this problem by better disseminating information.

Throughout the workshop, On Tuesday afternoon, participants were divided into workshops to complete an exercise on the inclusion of the women in the processes of peace negotiation after the eruption of a conflict. Four working groups were created as a means of reflecting on the inclusion of women in peace negotiations, the criteria for selecting women representatives in negotiations for peace, and the most relevant approach to tackling the violence experienced by women during these negotiations.

Day 3 Mme Bineta Diop spoke about the processes of mainstreaming gender into institutions including the former Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the African Union (AU). Mme Diop explained the series of AU Pre-Summit consultative meetings that were arranged in order to mobilize women's networks, to sensitize leaders to the importance of mainstreaming gender, and to push forward the women's agenda, discussing successes and failures up to this point.

Mme Diop encouraged participants to be mindful of the continuing challenges facing women on the continent – especially the current situations in Sudan, Somalia and the Ivory Coast – and to work in solidarity with the women of these countries.

Day 4 this Thursday, July 20, course participants visited the soldiers of the tactical training centre based in Thiès, about 70km outside of Dakar, where Senegalese soldiers are engaged in peace-keeping operations for the United Nations. In the presence of participants from thirty African countries, the Commander of the Tactical Centre considered the history, the mission, and the aims of the Centre before answering the questions of participants who shared their concerns around the importance of mainstreaming gender into UN peacekeeping operations. Afterwards, the course participants took part in a practical exercise with the Senegalese battalion as they prepared for their departure to Darfur.

On Friday, July 21, the Short Course came to a close with a presentation by Mrs. Aminata Tall, Minister of State of the Republic Senegal in conjunction with the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Senegal, who have donated computers to the newly established PanAfrican Centre for Gender, Peace and Development.



