



Femmes Africa Solidarité

27th Human Rights Council
Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective
15 September 2014, 15:00-18:00.
Palais des Nations, Geneva

TALKING POINTS OF MS BINETA DIOP

I am delighted to participate in this panel as President of FAS and African Union Commission Chairperson's for Women Peace and Security and I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for inviting me to share this podium with distinguished experts on women's rights and gender integration.

Since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, I am pleased to observe that the Human Rights Council made impressive progress with the integration of a gender perspective into its various bodies and mechanisms.

Mr President,

Allow me to salute here the remarkable work done by the former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay, who put women's human rights at the heart of her mission throughout her whole mandate.

However, despite remarkable progress have been achieved to promote and protect women's human rights, women throughout the world are still amongst the poorest and most marginalized, with limited access to rights, resources and opportunities.

If you look at my continent, violent conflict remains one of Africa's dominant challenges to sustainable peace and development. We know the consequences, loss of life, displacement of population, child soldiers, and women's bodies used as the battle field.

Thus African women continue to suffer disproportionately from conflict particularly as victims of sexual and gender-based violence coupled with marginalization from peace processes and decision-making structures.

As we are witnessing all atrocities that women suffer in too many conflicts today, notably in Central African Republic or South Sudan, we must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected.

Protecting African women rights and dignity and ensuring the voice of vulnerable women are heard much more clearly in peace building and conflict resolution, have been the struggle of my life with my organisation FAS and recently with my AU mandate, and today, I would like to explain you why the women, peace and security agenda should be integrated into the work of the Council mandate holders.

FAS has been working for almost two decades with women's civil-society organisations and female activists, convinced they can contribute greatly to maintaining the cohesion of their communities during times of conflict. Rather than perceiving women only as victims, we acknowledge them as active civil society agents with the skills, strengths, and the potential to bring about positive change. We empower women providing them with the capacity and knowledge necessary to effectively advocate for their rights and give them access from the national authorities to the highest international decision-making bodies on human rights.

Let me give you one example on how we recently use this strategy and work with the Council on the Central African Republic issue.

Last year, we invited a woman civil society from CAR, Ms Balipou, who was the only human rights defender from her country to speak at the HRC in 2013. She addressed two sessions of the Council on behalf of women's groups in her country to bring the women, peace and security agenda.

Here at the Council, Ms Balipou could reach her Minister of Justice and together with FAS advocacy efforts, we have contributed to the adoption of two resolutions which led the appointment of the independent expert, Ms Keita Bocoum.

Our work continued on the field as we mobilized women groups in CAR, mediated amongst them to setting up a common agenda and facilitated the consultation with the independent expert. We also met with Ms Keita Bocoum in Geneva and monitor her reports to ensure she highlighted the women's recommendations.

Parallel to this process, FAS has provided technical support to a joint AU-UN solidarity mission I did with UN Women director. We held a series of consultations in Bangui to engage the CAR Transitional Authorities, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, religious leaders, and especially women's groups, as well as met with the victims of the conflict. The mission provided recommendation to support the leadership of women in local reconciliation, national dialogues, transitional justice and elections.

As you know, Ms Keita Bocoum will present her final report in this Assembly next week. She did an excellent work despite the very difficult conditions on the ground. It belongs now to the Council and its Member States to monitor the implementation at national and international levels, of the many recommendations, that are contained in her reports. This is the only way to fulfil the council's commitment to improve human rights.

I would like to stress here how much the consultation with civil society and local groups is essential as they constitute a crucial link between policy and action. Thus they take on an important role of holding States accountable for their commitments and keep a close watch on the implementation of resolutions and recommendations of special procedures at the national level.

I strongly believe that independent experts or special rapporteurs, through their country-based work, can improve women's life by supporting the inclusion of women's in peace, security and human rights processes. This is particularly important because it represents an opportunity for women to influence the entire political and legal framework of their country.

Mandate holders must consult with communities, civil society and women's organizations during country visits and incorporate their recommendation in subsequent reports and submissions on cases. Civil society organizations, Women's groups and human rights defenders all have a vital role in creating awareness of, and protecting, women's rights.

This process will not only contribute to improve women's access to human rights at the local level and protect women's dignity but also strengthen their leadership and facilitate their inclusion in politics. Giving the opportunity to human rights defenders to speak and to be heard by an independent expert is an incommensurable value, especially in countries where human rights violation are high, access restricted and international exposure very low.

Finally, I would like to reserve my last words for the Council mandate holders. I encourage them to pay a particular attention to the inclusive participation of women in peace building and invite you during your country visits to observe who is seating at the peace table? You will find a mediator, you find parties that are in conflict – but you don't find women. With your mandate, you can help to change this. You can listen women, echo their voice, and help them to bring their agenda on peace and security.

Thank you for your attention.