



## 491<sup>st</sup> Peace and Security Council Open Session on Vulnerability of Women and Children in Conflict Situations in Africa

### Statement

9 March 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mme Chair, esteemed ambassadors, your Excellencies, all protocols observed. Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the deliberations on this pertinent topic.

FAS has been highly active in promoting the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Africa and we welcome the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the resolution. FAS contributed to an expert report on eliminating violence against women and children in armed conflicts, which has been adopted by the Panel of the Wise.

FAS also contributed to the first PSC open session on Women and Children in armed conflicts in Africa in March 2010 and during the second session in March 2011, in partnership with other stakeholders FAS has mobilized women survivors of sexual violence in conflict to produce a statement consolidating their views and recommendations.

Women continue to be targeted by armed groups as recent cases in Nigeria, South Sudan and the Sahel region indicate. Religious extremism, partisan conflict and political polarization leading to violence in many African countries are still affecting women disproportionately. Women are being kidnapped, sexually abused and exploited.

FAS urges member states and the AUC to maximize the effort on conflict prevention, management and post-conflict reconstruction by taking in consideration the special needs of women. We call upon:

- The AU and the Panel of the Wise to work with grassroots women's organizations in order to get timely information and plan in advance for early responses.
- Member States to ensure that national legislation acknowledges sexual violence as a crime against humanity and implement existing laws to bring about an end to impunity.
- Member States to ratify and domesticate the Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other regional, continental and global frameworks to ensure the protection of women and children
- For the accelerated implementation of national and regional action plans for 1325 and the requisite financing
- Establish synergies between AU organs, APSA structure, RECs and CSOs to enhance women's rights

We denounce the abductions and kidnappings of girls in Nigeria and we demand the protection of girls, including from early and forced marriages.

Mme Chair, FAS believes that the vulnerability of women can be mitigated and even eliminated when we increase their participation in peace processes, empower them economically and strengthen their decision making capacity both at the social and political level.

As the Open Session is taking place on the anniversary of International Women's day, we use this opportunity to ask everyone to commemorate this day by upholding the rights of women and strengthening their protection and agency.