



## **African parliament head says women vital to ending African conflicts**

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**Dakar, Senegal (PANA) -** Gertrude Mongella, president of the Pan-African Parliament, an organ of the African Union, Sunday said getting women involved in undertakings to resolve conflicts on the African continent has proven crucial in ending disputes.

Speaking at the first African Forum on Gender convening here 1-2 May, Mongella, who hails from Tanzania, cited the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which she said was "settled with the involvement of African women".

"We must fight to settle conflicts on our continent. I need your support because Africa needs to talk with one voice. We must also move to be more concrete and credible in our actions," Mongella told conferees, comprising mainly women from Africa and the Arab world.

"We must display our solidarity with these women who suffer in the different conflicts raging on the continent," she said.

"The Organisation of African Unity was a male-dominated organisation. But the African Union is more female-oriented," Mongella said in recognition of the gender-parity policy of the AU.

She also declared: "It is time we share our experiences with women from the other regions of the world. We must move towards women in Asia, Europe and America."

Also speaking at the forum, Saïda Agrébi, a member of the Tunisian parliament and president of the Association of Tunisian Mothers, said the gathering provided a unique setting to share experiences, and called for the building of a bridge of dialogue between African women and women around the world.

Mrs Haïfa Fahoul Al Kaylani, co-president of 'Dialogue with Arab Women' and founder and president of the Forum of Arab women, declared: "We have many challenges to take up. We have a lot of work to do together. We are going to discuss a lot and take decisions. But I assure you that these recommendations are going to be translated into actions."

The first African Forum on Gender, convening on the theme: "Dialogue with Arab Women on Economic and Political Issues", will include the presentation of awards to Presidents Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa for their commitment in fostering gender mainstreaming in Africa.