



Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development

Dialogue with Arab Women on Economic and Political Issues

Premiere of the African Gender Award

1 - 2 May 2005 in Dakar, Senegal

Aide-Mémoire

In the vision of creating a better future for women of the African continent, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and its *Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development*, in conjunction with its partners, is holding the *Dialogue with Arab Women on Economic and Political Issues* from 1-2 May 2005 in Dakar, Senegal. The Forum will be held every two years. This first Forum will allow actors in the Arab and African worlds to exchange with each other ideas and experiences on economic, political and gender issues through discussions held over two days.

This Forum will also host the premiere of the African Gender Award, as well as the groundbreaking of the *Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development*.

Participating in this historical event will be movers and shakers of the African and Arab communities.

Context

Following a string of milestones, African women are facing an incredible opportunity to effect positive change on their continent.

In June of 2002, the African Union Women's Committee (AWCPD) and Femmes Africa Solidarité organised a vigorous campaign for gender mainstreaming involving many African women's networks that resulted in the "Durban Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender and Women's Effective Participation in the African Union".

In July of 2002, at the Session of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in Durban, South Africa, His Excellency President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal put forward to the Assembly recommendations pursuant to the Durban Declaration. His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, the chair of this Session, firmly supported President Wade's decision. The end result: the Assembly unanimously adopted a gender parity policy in the AU Commission. This was achieved against a historical backdrop where the voice of African women had never been effectively represented at the continental body.

In July of 2003, in Maputo, Mozambique, Africa saw its first visible achievement in complete gender parity in the African Union Commission, with the election of five female Commissioners out of ten. Moreover, the African Union adopted the "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa".

In July of 2004, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the leadership of African Union Chairperson, His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konaré, the relentless efforts of women resulted in the African Heads of State adopting the "Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa". The African Heads of States have thus proposed to monitor themselves on gender mainstreaming.

Now, in 2005 in Dakar, Senegal, to build upon the above initial hard-won advances, the *Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development*, in conjunction with its partners, is instituting the *African Gender Award* as a way to encourage accountability on the parity decision and on the "Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa". The African Gender Award highlights and recognises those who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in furthering gender mainstreaming in the economic and political spheres, as well as addressing social and cultural barriers that impede the involvement of women.

In the Arab community, women are playing a growing role with particular advancement in the economic sector. In the African community, women are pushing hard for progress on human rights. There is much to be learned from one another on how to construct and sustain an Africa that is successful on political and economic fronts. Economic empowerment and a balanced leadership that includes women are necessary for a lasting peace. Women's rights are human rights. The Forum discussions are held in this spirit.

To ensure the training of strong leaders to capacity-build, Femmes Africa Solidarité is also launching the *Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development*, the first of its kind. This centre of excellence will serve as a hub for training, exchange and documentation for the development of a sustainable peace with a focus on gender issues. This pioneering initiative is supported by His Excellency President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal.

Objective

The objective of this Forum, the first of a series to be organised every two years, is to ensure that there is actionable discussion between the various stakeholders in African and other communities concerning relations between gender, political and economic issues. This first Forum will bring together African and Arab actors concerned with these issues.

Programme

The Forum will include discussions in the form of plenary sessions and workshops, the groundbreaking ceremony for the building of the Centre, a press conference, and the *African Gender Award Ceremony*.

Partners

The African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are eminent partners of Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and its *Pan-African Centre for Gender, Peace and Development*. The Centre plans to work with the UNDP on showcasing the best practices of women in the African and Arab communities by using the indicators in the UNDP's "Human Development Report". The Centre will also be using the matrix being developed by the African Union as one of its keys for assessing the performance of leaders, as well as the "African Gender and Development Index Report" of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Expected Results

It is expected that the Forum will result in:

- Inspiring a durable commitment to mainstreaming and accountability on gender issues.
- Learning lessons from the Arab and African experiences on the African continent.
- Strengthening concerted action between actors in public and economic spheres.
- Instilling a culture of solidarity at the continental level.

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