



**12th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming
in the African Union
21-23 June 2008**

Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

CONCEPT NOTE

I. Introduction

The 12th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting taking place from 21-22 June 2008, is being organized by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), Women Gender & Development Directorate (WGDD) and the UNECA African Centre for Gender and Social Development. FAS is being supported by AWDF, OSIWA, Action Aid, DFID, Government of Finland, African Development Bank, and Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement. The meeting is being locally coordinated by the Egyptian Business Women Association and the National Council for Women of Egypt.

It will be held on the margins of the 11th Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union (AU) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The AU meeting will comprise of the 16th Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), 24 - 25 June 2008; the 13th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council (27 - 28 June 2008) and the 11th Ordinary Session of the

Assembly of Heads of State and Government, 30 June - 1 July 2008.

II. Background

Member States of the AU marked a new beginning in the history of the gender agenda in Africa through the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the “Durban Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender and Women’s Effective Participation in the African Union” at the Addis Summit meeting in July 2004. SDGEA calls for the full promotion and protection of women’s rights at the national and regional level. This declaration, by a continental organization, is an unprecedented achievement towards gender-mainstreaming at the highest level, prioritizing issues such as HIV/AIDS, the recruitment of child soldiers, and the implementation of gender-specific economic, social, and legal measures.

Following the adoption of the SDGEA, women’s civil society networks have assembled on numerous occasions to further the work of mainstreaming gender in the AU. In July 2005, during the 6th Pre-Summit Consultative Meeting on Gender Mainstreaming in the AU held in Tripoli, Libya, African women’s networks committed themselves to launching an advocacy campaign on the SDGEA by finalizing the “Civil Society Framework for Monitoring and Evaluating the Solemn Declaration”. These women’s organizations further agreed to share monitoring responsibilities, a decision reflected in an official document entitled “Memorandum of Understanding arising from the Tripoli Commitment for Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting on the Implementation of the Solemn Declaration”.

Women’s organizations subsequently convened in Dakar, in October 2005 with the Minister of Women and Gender Issues of the Government of Senegal, during the Civil Society Organizations Meeting prior to the First African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Women and Gender. The “Dakar Strategic Partnership”, which was the 7th Pre Summit’s address to AU member States and the AU Commission held in Dakar, October 2005, regrouped and updated the work that had began in previous Consultative Meetings. Its focus was aimed at pursuing the involvement of civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGEA as well as obtaining a solemn commitment from AU Member States to involve civil society organizations in such processes. The incorporation of the African Women Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) into the mechanisms of the AU demonstrated the achievements of the advocacy work undertaken by women civil society organizations.

At the Consultative Meeting which took place in Banjul, Gambia in June 2006, women’s networks and organizations officially launched the “Gender is my Agenda” Campaign. In addition to evaluating the Campaign network programme, the meeting was used as a tool to strengthen the monitoring, reporting and advocacy strategies and mobilize the different actors in the gender mainstreaming agenda.

The adoption of the SDGEA in 2004 was the result of a long process characterized by the tireless work and achievements accomplished by African women’s networks with support of the AWCPD and coordinated by FAS. This involved a sequence of Consultative Meetings which were held with African women’s organizations in the following locations: Durban, June 2002; Dakar, April 2003; Maputo, June 2003; Addis Ababa, June 2004; Abuja, January 2005; Tripoli, July 2005, Dakar 2005; and Banjul, June 2006; Addis Ababa, January 2007; Accra, June 2007; Addis, 2008.

Key documents that were adopted during these consultations include the “Durban Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender and Women’s Effective Participation in the African Union”; the “Dakar

Strategy”; the “Maputo Declaration”; the “African Women’s Contribution to the Declaration on Mainstreaming Gender in the African Union”; the “Abuja Recommendations for Civil Society Monitoring and Evaluation of the Solemn Declaration”; the “Tripoli Commitment”; the “Dakar Strategic Partnership”; the “Banjul Declaration” and the “Banjul Resolution”, and the “Sudanese Women’s Declaration on Darfur”.

III. Rationale

Although the African Union (AU) has made significant progress over the years with respect to gender issues and its decisions and declarations have moved forward the gender agenda, much work remains for the attainment of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming in the AU, its programs and organs and its Member States.

The evaluation of the priority thematic areas identified in the SDGEA show that some progress has been recorded but a lot remains to be done in the areas of governance, peace and security, human rights, health, education and economic empowerment. Gender parity and mainstreaming is and needs to be considered as a human rights and good governance issue.

With regard to civil society organizations, it is crucial that they continue to make governments accountable for their commitment to accelerate the implementation of the SDGEA. Four years after the adoption of this instrument, it is indispensable to carry out an assessment of the tools and methodologies dedicated to the monitoring/evaluation of it and their efficiency to address new emerging issues. Therefore, opportunities must be created to facilitate dialogue between the AU and CSO for the revision of strategies on gender mainstreaming within the AU, its organs and programs and its member states.

It is necessary for the network members of the "Gender is my Agenda" Campaign to ensure knowledge and competence transfer to strengthen the capacities of women advocates in Africa and, exploiting the platform of the Campaign, creating a critical mass of supporters that will reinforce the voice of women at political level to challenge the governments and their commitments.

In this regard, the network of women’s organization members of the “Gender is my Agenda” Campaign have agreed to convene the 12th Consultative Meeting in Sharm el Sheik, in June 2008. The meeting will bring together the focal points of the Campaign and other participating organizations to discuss the changing environment at the regional and international level which requires a paradigm shift in our work as CSOs advocating for effective gender parity policies and practice. New issues have emerged such as the transformation of the AU into the Union Government. This process should not bypass women but rather pave the way to full citizenship and empowerment

IV. Objectives of the Pre –Summit Consultative Meeting

To discuss the changing environment at the regional and international level and elaborate a new paradigm in the work of CSOs advocating for effective gender parity policies and practice.

The specific objectives of the meeting are the following:

- To review new strategies of advocacy for effective gender parity policies and practice;
- To comment on State Reports on the implementation of the SDGEA on the various thematic issues;

- To present the *Best Practices Booklet*, a study commissioned by FAS on gender best practices;
- To assess progress and shortcomings in implementation of the SDGEA during these last years and make recommendations to the forthcoming new President of the AU Commission and the commissioners;
- To raise awareness among women's grassroots organizations at the national, subregional and regional level of the SDGEA;
- To reinforce the commitment of civil society members of the Campaign to participate in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGEA.
- To foster the partnership between different stakeholders and strengthen the commitment to move forward the effective implementation of the SDGEA;
- To identify future challenges and to establish the way forward in support of implementing the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

V. Activities of the meeting

The meeting will comprise the following activities:

1. Organization of a two-day Pre-Summit Consultations Dissemination of information on the SDGEA, and a day of networking
2. Presentation of the *Best Practices Booklet*
3. Advocacy activities around the AU Head of States and Government Summit
4. Provision of space for networking and partnership with all the stakeholders involved in the campaign

VI. Expected outcomes

The key expected outcomes of this meeting are the following:

- To refine new strategies of advocacy for effective gender parity policies and practice, following the changing environment at the regional and international level
- To share Best Practices and Lessons Learned with Gender is my Agenda Network and other civil society organizations.
- To highlight key issues, strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the SDGEA and make clear recommendations to the new President of the AU Commission and the AU Commissioners
- To mobilize and sensitise women's grassroots organizations and civil society organizations on the gender mainstreaming agenda and the Campaign activities;
- To strengthen partnerships with women's organizations at all levels and to strengthen regional mechanisms on gender issues;
- To commit civil society focal points on thematic issues related to the SDGEA and to its follow up;
- For advocacy issues to be undertaken on common priority areas of concern in the implementation of the SDGEA.

VII. Outputs

The expected outputs of the meetings are as follows:

- To document State contributions to the implementation of the SDGEA;
- To raise awareness on the SDGEA and the work of the Campaign.
- To submit the recommendations from the Consultative meeting to the AU.
- A case study that will highlight best practices and lessons learned on gender equality policy and mainstreaming at all levels for knowledge building and replication which will be shared with the different stakeholders
- The pioneers of gender parity principles and mainstreaming are acknowledged and celebrated
- To raise awareness on the need to sustain and transform policy change in favour of gender equity and mainstreaming into attitudinal and behavioural change for the emergence of a new social order that will guarantee the human security , particularly that of women.

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