



PRESS RELEASE

The 24th GIMAC consultative meeting on gender mainstreaming in the African Union highlights that the agriculture potential of women and youth is yet to be unleashed

Malabo, 21 June 2014 – The 24th Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) consultative meeting took place from the 19-20 June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, ahead of the bi-annual African Union (AU) Summit on agriculture and food security.

Coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), with the support of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), the event gathered more than 70 African women from diverse backgrounds, representing the GIMAC network's 55 member organizations, amongst them, Ipas Africa Alliance, Urgent Action Fund, World YWCA, Isis-WICCE and the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund (SMWF). Women shared stories, good practices and challenges on issues ranging from agriculture and food security, to violence against women in current emerging conflicts, the post-2015 agenda, Agenda 2063, and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325. Participants adopted a set of recommendations to be shared with AU Heads of States and governments to urge them to take action on prevailing and emerging issues affecting women and girls in Africa.

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson for the African Union Commission (AUC), Ms. Bineta Diop, the AUC Chairperson's Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, African Ministers of Gender, and Gender focal points from continental and regional organizations (NEPAD, Regional Economic Communities, African Development Bank, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, among others), participated in the discussions. Within the framework of Agenda 2063, the AU vision and program to define "The Africa We Want" in 50 years, Dr. Dlamini Zuma reiterated the central role of women: "In the Africa We Want, our place, as women, is everywhere." She committed to consult with GIMAC members on a regular basis to ensure that issues faced by women are appropriately addressed by the African Union.

Regarding agriculture, "African women work hard," Dr. Thelma Awori, Board Chair of the Institute for Social Transformation, said. "Limited access to land, credit, information, training on new technologies, makes their work even more difficult. This energy could be dedicated to increase agricultural productivity and alleviate more people from hunger and poverty." The group reiterated that the implementation of policies and agreements regarding women's empowerment in agriculture and agribusiness through access to land, finance, mechanization and capacity building is essential. "We need to send more girls to school to learn agriculture," Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma said, arguing that equipping women, girls and the youth with additional technical skills such as mathematics, engineering, science and technology is crucial. GIMAC presented its flagship project on agriculture, the initiative to "Empower Women in Agriculture" (EWA), which addresses these issues.

With regards to violence against women, the reinforcement of law and implementation of commitments to protect women's and girls' rights and integrity were stressed, especially in Nigeria, Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sahel region, where the full and meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution processes was requested. The abduction of the Nigerian schoolgirls was addressed as a priority and it was recommended that a GIMAC solidarity mission to Nigeria should soon be conducted.

This 24th GIMAC was particularly important for women from Equatorial Guinea, who raised their concerns and asked to not be left behind: "We need training, we need your support, we need to share our experiences and practices to improve our condition". Other participants stressed the importance of standing together in solidarity as well as the added value of sharing stories, both positive and negative, and to formulate solutions together, to improve women's lives.

The Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC)

The GIMAC is a network of more than 55 organizations from the African civil society working on women's empowerment and advocating for gender equality, in the areas of education, health, economic and political empowerment, peace and security, human rights, youth, governance and farming. Amongst other activities, the GIMAC members gather twice a year in the margins of the African Union Summits to share their stories and experience, and address their needs and challenges. Discussions during these two-day consultative meetings lead to the adoption of a set of recommendations presented to the AU Heads of State and Government to ensure gender equality remains on the agenda. *For more information:* www.genderismyagenda.org.

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) is an African non-governmental organization promoting women's full participation in peace processes, in conflict and post-conflict countries as well as gender equality and women's economic and political empowerment. FAS operates at national, regional and international level using the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (SGDEA) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 as mechanisms to give a voice to, and build the capacity of grassroots women's organizations at all levels of peace processes. FAS' supports the implementation of, and monitors commitments made by African leaders within the framework of these mechanisms, and is in charge of coordinating the GIMAC network.

For more information: www.fasngo.org

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