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P. O. Box 3243, Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA Tel.: 00251-11-5517700 Cable: AU, ADDIS ABABA Website:  
[www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

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**PART 1 REPORT**

**THE PLANNING MEETING ON THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE  
(AWD)**

**(AT THE MARGINS OF THE 54<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE CSW)  
06 MARCH 2010  
AU OFFICE, NEW YORK, USA**

## I. **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

The idea of a Women's Decade was hatched in 1975 by the United Nations at the First World Conference on Women that was held in Mexico City. Since then, African women have been involved, and continue to participate in local and international consultations on women's rights and gender equality. African women's contributions have enriched discussions at the subsequent Women World Conferences in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

At their Extra-Ordinary Meeting of AU Ministers of Gender and Women Affairs in Maseru, Lesotho in December 2008, the Ministers called on the AU to declare 2010 – 2020 as African Women's Decade, and undertake wide consultations to ensure that the Decade is a success. The Ministers' proposal was adopted by AU Heads of State and Government in Assembly Dec. 487 (XIX) which declared 2010 – 2020 as African Women's Decade.

Following the adoption of the Roadmap for the Implementation of the African Women Decade (AWD) 2010 - 2020 by Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs at their meeting in Banjul on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009, and in an effort to kick start the activities of the Decade, the Women Gender and Development Directorate (WGDD) held a one day Planning Meeting on 06 March 2010 on activities to be carried out in preparation for the launching of the AWD at the margins of the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was being held in New York from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

The AU took advantage of the presence and participation of Gender Ministers, Experts and CSOs at the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW Session to hold the Planning Meeting, as this provided an opportunity for the AU Commission to and also activate the working committees. The purpose of the Planning Meeting was therefore to agree on the roll-out activities for the launching of the African Women's Decade, which the Ministers insisted should be based on a bottom up approach.

Taking this into consideration, the Meeting was to discuss activities to be carried out at the local, national, regional and continental levels, agree on the time lines as well as set

up Working Committees while identifying thematic leaders for the 10 themes of the Decade, namely:

1. Fighting Poverty and Promoting Economic Empowerment of Women and Entrepreneurship
2. Agriculture and Food Security
3. Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV and AIDS
4. Education, Science and Technology
5. Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development
6. Peace and Security and Violence Against Women
7. Governance and Legal Protection
8. Finance and Gender Budgeting
9. Women In Decision-making position
10. Young Women Movement

## **II. ATTENDANCE**

The meeting was attended by the following thirty (30) representatives of AU Member States from the capitals and New York Missions: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Congo DRC, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zimbabwe. The US Ambassador to the UN-CSW, and a representative of Panama participated at the meeting.

Other participants were drawn from the UN Agencies, AU-ECOSOCC, AUWC, PAWO, and several Civil Society Organizations.

### **III. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU OF THE MEETING**

The Bureau for the Meeting of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs of November 2009 was maintained for the Meeting, as follows:

Chairperson: The Gambia

1st Vice Chairperson: Swaziland

2nd Vice Chairperson: Mauritania

3rd Vice Chairperson: Equatorial Guinea

Rapporteur: Uganda

### **IV. OPENING SESSION**

The Officer in Charge of the AU Permanent Mission, Ms. Alice Mungwa, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of Ambassador Tete Antonio, the AU Permanent Representative, who was in Addis Abba, Ethiopia on official mission. The Director of Women, Gender and Development (WGDD), Madam Litha Musyimi-Ogana also welcomed all the participants while highlighting the purpose of the Meeting.

H.E. the Vice President of Republic of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Njie-Saidy, who chaired the meeting, started by warmly welcoming the delegates to the meeting. She observed that the fact that participants attended the meeting despite it being a Saturday, was a sign of commitment.

### **V. ADOPTION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme of the meeting (**Attached to this Report as Annex 1**) was adopted as proposed with the addition of an item for discussion on the UN gender entity.

### **VI. OTHER DISCUSSIONS**

Participants requested that future side meeting like this be held during the first week of the CSW on a weekday and not at a weekend. They also requested the AU New York office to spearhead, through the African Missions in New York, the change in dates for the meetings of the CSW so that it does not clash with the days for the 8 March celebration of International Women's Day.

## **VII. OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING MEETING**

The WGDD Director briefed the Meeting on the progress made so far in preparation for the launching the African Women Decade (2010-2020). She recalled the Brainstorming Session on the AWD in a back to back held at the margins of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the CSW meeting in March 2009, and confirmed that the Commission had followed the recommendations of the brainstorming meeting to the letter and convened a meeting of Member States to prepare a Road Map for Decade which was held in the Gambia in November 2009. The Roadmap prepared at the meeting of Experts in May 2009 was adopted by the Meeting of Ministers in November 2009, also in Banjul, again in The Gambia. She stressed the purpose for the Planning meeting was to share ideas on how best to make the Decade a success through the operationalization of Road Map and that the Planning meeting was geared to set up of Committees from the grassroots to the Continental level.

She stated that the AU had been receiving offers for the launch of the Decade at the Continental and Regional levels. There was therefore room for Member States to host at both levels based on the fulfilment of AU requirements for Member States to host such meetings.

In the ensuing discussions, Member States were informed that the Legal Department would be advising on the level of the launching of the Decade, which would be between the level of the AU Assembly and Ministers. All segments of the society would be involved, from First Ladies to rural women. Meanwhile there were two confirmed offers to host the Continental launch, one from Kenya and the other from the Kingdom of Swaziland. The Legal Department would be confirming the country chosen for the launch by the end of March 2010. The offer of Libya to host the Meeting of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs in 2010 was also still on the table. The participation of the AU Organs at regional and continental levels and Diaspora was stressed.

Regarding the expected date of the launch, the Director informed the meeting that this would be in the second half of 2010. The possibility of 5 October, being Rural Women's Day, was mentioned.

Opportunities and events were being used and would continue to be used to publicise the Decade, namely: the March 8 statement of the AU Chairperson that was on the AU website; this Planning Meeting; and other important Days like African Day of 25 May, the Soccer World Cup in July in South Africa and the AU Kampala Summit in July 2010 with the theme of Maternal Mortality, Pan African Women day 31<sup>st</sup> July and the African Union day, among others.

#### **VIII. PROPOSED PROGRAMMES ON THE DECADE LAUNCHING ACTIVITIES FOR THE GRASSROOTS, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL LEVELS**

The WGDD Director made a presentation based on a four page summary of the Decade's Road Map (**attached to this Report as Annex 2**). National Committees would be set up composed of all segments of the society. The national Committees in each country would propose at least one good practice Project for each theme per year. Thus if at least one Project per country would be supported per theme per year from the AU Fund, at least 53 projects would be supported for each of the 10 years of the Decade. In that case, by the end of the Decade, 530 projects would have been supported under the AU Fund for Women. Projects being supported would have to be existing projects needing additional support to boost them for the one year. She however, was optimistic that with support from development partners the fund would be able to support more than one project per Member State per year.

At the Regional level, a Ministerial Working Committee of 10 would also need to be set up to work closely with the RECs. This Committee of ten would have 2 representatives per region serving on rotational basis for 2 years. It was envisaged that this arrangement would ensure that all ministers in the 53 Member States would have served at for at least 2 years by the end of the Decade. Each Region will choose its core UN Agencies.

At the Continental/AU level, A Working group of 30 will be put in place composed of one person per Region drawn from Member States, PAP, ECOSOCC, CSOs, PAWO, and AUWC.

In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized the need to engage men, especially young men, in the activities of the Decade; the handicapped and aged should not be forgotten in the activities for the Decade; there is a need to build capacity and therefore need for time to put the structures in place; the focus should be on outputs and so wanted to know if it would be possible to carry a project into another year, thus there is a need to be flexible, with progress reviewed every 5 years; the need for partnership between government structures and CSOs was stressed; existing structures for women and gender matters would be used; the government should be represented at the Continental level; it was proposed that Violence Against Women (VAW) would stand out on its own and it was agreed that the theme should be changed to Peace, Security and VAW; it was explained that UN Agencies would be mapped and aligned to the various themes; countries not contributing to the Fund would benefit from it as long as they were not under sanctions; and, the need to minimize the number of meetings was stressed.

#### **IX. BRIEFINGS: CAMPAIGN ON ACCELERATED REDUCTION OF MATERNAL MORTALITY IN AFRICA (CARMMA)**

The major agenda item of the afternoon session of the meeting was the briefing on the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA) and the July AU Summit focusing on Maternal and Child Health.

Ms. Musyimi-Ogana emphasized that the CARMMA was an AU initiative and outlined some of the key highlights of the campaign and also informed the meeting on the status of the adoption of CARMMA. She said about 9 countries had adopted it between May 2009 and March 2010. These countries are; Ethiopia June 2009, Mozambique in August, 2009, Malawi August 2009, Rwanda October 2009, Nigeria in October 2009, Swaziland, October 2009, Ghana, November 2009, Namibia December 2009 and Chad in December 2009.

The second presentation was by Ms Amanita Toure, the UNFPA Global Gender Chief. Her presentation was on Linking ICPD with CARMA, Maputo Plan and AU summit Theme. She began by linking the 15 years of ICPD and the 15 years of Beijing Platform for Action, she emphasised that while some progress had been recorded in other ICPD areas, very little progress had been made on the issue of maternal mortality. Women

are still dying needlessly, particularly in Asia and Sub-Sahara Africa. She described the situation as a catastrophe that needed immediate attention.

She further said that the Heads of State in Addis Ababa promised to scale up access to family planning, availability of skilled birth attendants, improve emergency services, and strengthen the enactment of national laws on gender equity. She stressed further that Ministers of health also agreed to develop integrated approach to HIV/AIDs.

The third presentation was by Mr Rotimi Sankore, Coordinator of the Africa Public Health Alliance & 15%+ Campaign. He focussed on proposed Policy and Budget action required for Actualisation of CARMMA, Global and African Maternal and Child Health Targets, and recommendations towards the AU July Summit theme.

He underlined that the issue of Women's and Child health including Maternal Health is too important to be left to Minister's of Health alone. He started by creating an overall context of the state of health in Africa, stating that Africa has been loosing approximately 8 million lives annually for the last four years to MDG 4, 5 and 6 issues alone, including 5 million children under 5 and approximately 300,000 maternal deaths a year. The implication was that a population equivalent to a combination of several African countries had been lost to preventable, treatable or manageable causes over the last four years.

On this basis, the Hon. Ministers decided to adopt CARMMA as a priority issue on the working agenda of Women and Gender Ministers especially during the decade of African Women.

#### **X. BRIEFING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) (AFRICA-UNITE) CAMPAIGN**

Ms. Micheline Ravololonarisoa, the African Regional Chief of UNIFEM updated the meeting on the *VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) (AFRICA-UNITE) CAMPAIGN* of the UN Secretary General.

She recalled the launch of the Campaign at an event just before the AU Summit on 30 January 2010. She emphasized that the Campaign is based on 6 pillars and related to all sectors in society. She praised the high level commitment of AU Member States to the Campaign and stressed the commitment of UNIFEM to strengthen what was being done in Member States to protect women from abuse. She noted that some sub Regional launches had taken place and action was already being taken by some countries. The UN was now posed to support countries in adapting the campaign to their own needs.

In the ensuing discussion, participants who took the floor stressed the need for UNIFEM to work with countries to ensure that the Campaign reached the local level. Lack of funds and inadequate data base were identified as problems to be tackled for the campaign to be successful. The interest of the United States in violence against women in public office was mentioned by the US representative to the Planning Meeting Ambassador Meril Frank. Participants stressed that advocacy should be directed to focus on prevention of violence and the negative depiction of women in public life, in the media and art, including music.

In her response, Ms. Micheline Ravololonarisoa advised that the requests for funding should come from Member States, as the global campaign has raised funds that would be available to complement each country's National Action Plan. Countries could also request for help in developing their Plans. In conclusion, she advised Member States to contact the UNDP resident coordinator in their countries and called on them to launch the Campaign as a sign of commitment.

## **XI. BRIEFING ON THE NEW UN ENTITY**

Ms. Micheline Ravololonarisoa, briefed the meeting by referring them to the High Level Panel whose recommendations led to the adoption of UN Res 63/311. The report included extensive recommendations to consolidate existing agencies dealing with gender and women's affairs such as UNIFEM, USAGI, DAW and INSTRAW into one strong gender entity within the UN system, and thereby improve the effectiveness of United Nations operations.

## **XII. THE WAY FORWARD AND CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

In conclusion, the Meeting decided that:

- a meeting of the Experts be held to look at the proposals again. This meeting would be held within two days;
- Information on selection of Projects, criteria to help choose the 10 themes and Fliers on the Decade would be sent to Member States;
- Information on the launches to be sent to Member States by Mid April;
- Information on the Ministerial Meeting / Launch of the Decade to be sent to Member States by the end of April.

In her closing remarks, H.E. the Vice President of Republic of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Njie-Saidy, congratulated the Commission for the excellent preparations of the Planning Meeting and the Ministers for their record attendance as well as their valuable contributions in the planning process in general and on their inputs on the day's deliberations. She thanked all for actively contributing in at the Meeting. She also thanked the AU Chairperson and development partners for their support, and declared the meeting officially closed.