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PLATFORMS FOR ACTION IN THE AFRICAN REGION**

# **Assessment Report On: Women's Participation In The Peace Process**

*By*

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### ***Disclaimer***

The views expressed in the thematic assessment reports are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the organizations which provided financial assistance.

At the time of reproducing this version of the CD-ROM, the translation of the thematic assessment reports was in progress, hence the presentation of the reports in the original languages.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report was prepared for the Sixth African Women Regional Conference held in Addis Ababa from 22<sup>nd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November 1999. The Conference provides an opportunity to review the overall implementation of the African Platform for Action adopted in November 1994 and the Beijing Platform for Action adopted in September 1995.

The report assesses in particular the commitments made by Governments and United Nations Agencies to promote the participation of women in peace processes. It further looks at the national, sub-regional and regional mechanisms of monitoring the Platform for Action. The report contains the views and recommendations of participants attending the sixth African Regional Conference, who participated in the working shop on women and peace held during the conference.

The theme of Women's participation in the Peace process is very important for Africa. Women not only constitute the majority of the pre and especially post-conflict societies, but they are often the first to start calling for peace. There have been fourteen conflicts on the continent since the adoption of the two platforms. Africa has the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons on our globe. Against this background it is important that we assess the participation of women in bringing about peaceful positive changes. There can be no sustainable peace without the participation of women, who bear the brunt of the wars and internal conflicts. African women Peace activists lobbied hard to influence strong Government commitments to support the inclusion of women in the Peace processes, at the Fifth African Women's Regional Conference in Dakar, Senegal. This commitment was strengthened by the adoption of the African Platform for Action by the OAU Heads of States meeting in June 1995. There are some good examples from Governments that have included women in peace processes.

Through such actions the Governments have demonstrated their commitments. There is still a lot more that has to be done to ensure that women have a permanent position in decision-making structures.

United Nations agencies have played an important role in supporting women's participation by committing resources and technical support to enable women's groups build capacity to influence peace processes in their countries. Other initiatives include the promotion of peace education to promote a culture of peace.

The establishment of the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development brings hope for African women, that their voice will now be present in the negotiation of Peace on our continent. At the International level, the advancements made by the Rwandan Tribunal in prosecuting war crimes as well as to the characterization of sexual violence as an instrument of genocide and as a crime against humanity are welcome to the protection of women's rights.

There are new challenges to be considered in the search for peace. These include addressing the use of new and sophisticated arms and the use of anti-personnel mines. The arms industry continues to make profits while the African peoples suffer death or permanent disability. African women peace activists are committed to turn their attention and activism to the Northern countries which develop these arms.

There is much that needs to be done. There will be no development in Africa until there is an end to conflicts. The challenge of bringing peace to our continent is a challenge to all of us.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 *WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS: COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE AFRICAN & GLOBAL PLATFORMS***

Prior to the adoption of both the African & Global Platforms for Action, a regional Conference on Women and Peace took place in Kampala, Uganda, in November 1993. This was a joint initiative of the ECA, OAU & the Government of Uganda. This initiative was in response to the concerns of African Women about the increasing number of intrastate wars, violent conflicts and civil strife in the continent in which they are the major victims. It was in the context of the goals and objectives of the United Nations Women's Decade whose strategies and action plan emphasized the need for the promotion of equality, development and peace. It was also considered opportune time to examine the situation of women in the process of political changes and the role they play in conflict resolution and peace-building.

This conference focused attention on four areas of concern: the nature and effects of conflict and underdevelopment; women in the struggle for peace; the empowerment of women in the peace process; and a culture of tolerance and violence. The outcome was the Kampala Action Plan on Women Peace which was endorsed by the OAU Heads of States & Government (June 1995). The principal ideas contained therein were incorporated in the African Platform for Action and later in the Global Platform.

The causes of wars and conflicts are varied in all cases. War devastates all of society, but armed conflict, political instability and civil unrest inflict particular suffering on women and the girl child. The impact of violence against women and violation of the human rights of women in such situations is experienced by women of all ages. They suffer displacement, loss of home and property, involuntary disappearances, sexual slavery, rape, sexual abuse and forced pregnancy in situations of armed conflict, especially as a result of policies of ethnic cleansing and other new and emerging forms of violence.

When Governments, the International Community and Civil Society adopted the Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action (PFA), they resolved to inter alia, promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the overall incidence of human rights abuse on women in conflict situations.

Governments are called upon to uphold and reinforce standards set out in international humanitarian law and international rights instruments to prevent all acts of violence against women in situations of armed conflict and they are also called upon to make full investigation of all acts of violence against women committed during war, including rape, forced prostitution, and other forms of indecent assault and sexual slavery, as well as to prosecute all acts of violence.

Specifically, the PFA recognizing that the elimination of all forms of violence against women is central to equality, development and peace calls for governments and other agencies to commit themselves to undertake the following key activities:

**Strategic objective 1:** Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.

**Strategic objective 2:** Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.

**Strategic objective 3:** Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.

**Strategic objective 4:** Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

**Strategic objective 5:** Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women and other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women;

**Strategic objective 6:** Provide protection to women of the colonies and non-self governing territories.

## **2.0 COMMITMENTS**

Both the African and Beijing Platforms appreciate that without durable peace there can be no sustainable development; and that without sustainable development there can be no durable peace. They further stipulate that since peace is a pre-requisite for the advancement of women, without peace in Africa, none of the proposed recommendations and actions in the Platforms can be implemented. Considering that both women and men are victims of the consequence of conflict, representations of both gender in all the mechanisms of peace building is vital. Peace making is a life-long process that is based on partnerships which are inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development.

Five years after the Beijing conference there have been significant developments in the participation of women in the peace building process in Africa. Both Governments and United Nations agencies have contributed resources and goodwill that has seen women make significant strides in contributing to peace building on the continent.

The following are various commitments made by the United Nations Agencies, National Governments and Regional Governments in lieu of the pertinent critical area of concern in the two Platforms.

### **2.1 THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

The PFA identifies the United Nations as one of the key implementers of the Platform. Under the chapter on Institutional Arrangements (C), the PFA calls for the key United Nations agencies to integrate gender perspectives into all their policies and programmes, as well as a comprehensive implementation and follow up mechanism for the Platform. In order to be effective in the implementation of the PFA, it will be necessary for the United Nations to restructure and redefine its institutional capacity. This will also include the strengthening of strategies and working methods of the various United Nations bodies. Furthermore, it stipulates that all entities of the United Nations system focusing on the advancement of women shall have the necessary resources and support to carry out follow-up activities. (Para 306-311 PFA)



### 2.1.1 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM)

UNIFEM has set in motion several initiatives to promote women's participation in the peace process in Africa. Through its project called the African Women in Crisis project, popularly known as AFWIC, UNIFEM's program activities are focused on strengthening women's participation in peace processes and encouraging gender sensitive approaches to peace building. The framework of the Fund's global initiatives situates the promotion of human security as an integral part of any efforts to promote sustainable peace and development. UNIFEM is committed to achieve the following: (i) Build the leadership potential of women to make meaningful contributions to peacemaking processes at all levels; (ii) Facilitate efforts for engendering peace-building processes at national, regional and international levels; and (iii) Support measures to address the fundamental factors that increase women's vulnerability during periods of armed conflict.

### **2.1.2 THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, (OHCHR) is committed to promoting and protecting women's rights in time of war and peace. The agency is committed to ensuring that women and girls' rights in war situations must be respected and that women fully participate in conflict resolution. The agency supports the inclusion of women in peace building processes noting that women are true peacemakers and peace-builders in the field and at the negotiating table. The OHCHR operates in post conflict settings and on-going armed conflicts, from violent internal tensions to peaceful democratic transitions, requiring corresponding adjustments in the mandates and modus operandi of the agency.

### 2.1.3 UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

As indicated above the strategic objectives of both the Global and African Platforms on the "protection, assistance and training of refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women" state that governments, intergovernmental organizations, in particular the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), are to take urgent steps to accelerate and enhance the involvement of women, including refugees and the internally displaced, in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in the peace process.

The UNHCR is one of the key UN Agencies that is specifically concerned with activities in the areas of violence against women, women and armed conflict, human rights of women and the girl child.

The tragic consequences of man-made disasters such as armed conflict, civil strife and generalized violence trigger population displacement, especially of women and their young children exposing them to the dangers of violence & abuse.

UNHCR promotes women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace and non-violence forms of conflict resolution activities by training and peace-education activities. An example of this is the Rwandan women's initiative through which women can rebuild their lives and that of their communities. Other similar initiatives are being carried out in Rwanda, Uganda, Liberia and Kenya via different channels of mass education.

UNHCR is committed to using a participatory approach to combat violence against refugee women. The agency has encouraged the establishment of refugee task forces that offer counselling and support services to women who have been violated. They also advocate for the elimination of harmful practices such as FGM within the refugee community. To promote better programs for the protection and assistance to refugee women, the UNHCR has adopted a gender perspective in all of its policies and programs and invested financial and human resources in the development of training materials to guide its staff on promoting women's rights.

#### 2.1.4 UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES (UNFPA)

In collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other non-governmental organizations, the agency provides packages for reproductive health services that includes care and post-coital contraception for sexually violated women. This is a pro-active strategy that responds to the immediate need of vulnerable women, or those that the PFA identifies as women in special needs due to armed conflict.

#### 2.1.5 UNITED NATIONS EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

UNESCO is committed to promoting women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace. The agency in the last five years has supported initiatives to strengthen women's capacity for leadership in order to promote a culture of peace. UNESCO adopted the Manifesto

2000 for a culture of Peace and Non-violence in March 1999. The manifesto is a basic framework through which each and every individual commits them to promoting a culture of peace.

UNESCO is committed to actions that ensure equality between women and men. This way the agency commits itself to implement the PFA with adequate resources and political will and through, inter alia, the elaboration, implementation and follow up of National plans of action.

Following on the process that commenced in Kampala in 1994, with the development of the Kampala Action Plan, UNESCO has supported the development of Culture of Peace in Africa by hosting a conference in Zanzibar in May 1999. The Conference brought together over three hundred women from different walks of life. The meeting was the agency's contribution to a mid term review of PFA. The conference was a follow up of the process of building women's capacity in peace building in Africa. UNESCO's project on Civil Education for Peace and Good Governance seeks to document the experiences of women in peace processes.

## **2.2 NATIONAL COMMITMENTS**

Several countries took unprecedented initiatives to promote peace and the participation of women in the process.

- The Rwandan Government is committed to the integration of women in the reconstruction of its society. This Government's commitment is captured in its support and hosting of the 1997 Regional Conference on Peace, Gender and Development. The outcome of the conference was the adoption of the Kigali Declaration for Peace, Gender and Development 1997.
- The Rwandan Government set up a Ministry for Peace Process, which supports the participation of women in grassroots committees to participate in governance issues at this level. The Government also addressed the important issue of women's economic and land reform in post-conflict reconstruction. In this program the Government gave women's committees, comprising of elected officials, the responsibility for setting up contributory communal funds, intended to start economic activities at the commune and sector level. This initiative promoted women's active participation in post-conflict

reconstruction in Rwanda. The Government established a National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation to assist citizens deal with the trauma of the genocide.

- The Algerian Government took unprecedented action in facilitating the passing of legislation to decriminalize abortion to allow women who had been raped during armed inter-conflict access to abortion services. The Government further provided multidisciplinary trauma centers to assist women deal with trauma arising from the violations inflicted on them. The Government also introduced peace studies in the National School Curriculum.
- The Angolan Government through the Ministry of Family and Women's Promotion has supported the active participation of civil society organizations in the post conflict reconstruction process. Some of these are women's organizations.
- In Liberia and Burundi pressure from women's organizations contributed to a culture of negotiation for national peace. The Liberian government supported a Woman interim President who was instrumental in helping to broker the peace agreement.
- In Sierra Leone, the Government included the participation of four women out of a team of nine in the peace talks leading to the development of the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999.
- The Government of Chad established a National Institution to mediate conflicts. This institution includes women.
- The Government of Mali supports the active participation of women in peace building initiatives in the country. Women's stand against armed conflict has contributed to a new impetus to decrease the proliferation of small arms.
- In Burundi the participation of women was initially inconsistent due to lack of political will by all sides and in some cases strong resistance by political parties. However the Government established a Ministry of Peace in 1997 to coordinate activities for peace. Women were admitted into the National Unity and Reconstruction Committee in recognition of their important role in the promotion of peace. Women influenced and organized their participation in the Arusha Peace Negotiations and are now officially

- accredited as observers to the talks. The Ministry in charge of Social Action and Women's Affairs gathered women members of committees in seven provinces to discuss peace and income generating activities. The government supported the hosting of National Peace Festival on the Culture of Peace in January 1998.
- The Tunisian government reduced its military budget and supported women's organizations to participate in peace negotiations and activities. The Government introduced peace education in school syllabus.
- The Ugandan Government included women in its post conflict reconstruction program. The result of this is that Uganda has a strong institutional base that supports the active participation of women in decision making.
- Several Governments have initiated national education programs to support a peace culture; these include Togo, Rwanda, Algeria and Burundi.
- By virtue of accepting refugees in their countries, several Governments have adopted peace education and have addressed the needs of refugee women. These countries include Benin, Chad, Uganda, Tanzania, and Guinea. The following countries also made specific commitments in their action plans:

Angola-----	Participation of women in the peace process
Burkina Faso-----	Promote non-violence
Ghana-----	Peace is identified as a critical area of concern
Kenya-----	Women and Armed conflict is identified as a critical area of concern
Niger-----	Combat violence and the consequences of armed conflict: provide assistance to refugees and displaced women and reintegrate them in the process of development, train women and men to combat violence.
Nigeria-----	Increase the participation of women at the decision-making levels, protect women in armed conflict, promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution, and reduce military expenditure.
Sudan-----	Women and armed conflict is one of the critical areas of concern

South Africa----- Increase and strengthen the participation of women in conflict resolution and decision-making and leadership in peace and security activities, and protect women in armed and other conflict. Put forward legislation that must be amended, or new legislation that must be enacted.

### **3.0 STATISTICAL DATA ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT**

Within the last five years since the PFA was adopted, the status of African women has not improved significantly. In the last five years there has been increased civil strife and conflict. The majority of the estimated 8.1 million refugees, displaced persons and post conflict returnees in Africa in 1997 were women and children. War and conflict have increased violence against women and worsened the social and economic conditions under which they live. In situations of conflict, refugee and displaced women and girls often have been sexually assaulted. Reports compiled by women's human rights groups indicate that in Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, women and girls faced extreme violence, including rape and torture. Women living as refugees have been pushed to prostitution. The UN 1996 report to the UN General Assembly stipulates that women of all ages may be victims of violence in conflict, but adolescent girls are particularly at risk for a range of reasons, including body size. The impact of armed conflict on children especially the girls is atrocious reflecting that overall, there has been slow progress in improving the status of African women in conflict situation. Programs to promote the health of African women through maternal and childcare services and family planning services have been undercut by reduction of finances and other resources at various levels.

A review of existing data in the last five years demonstrate that as the continent is faced with harsh social economic conditions, women have had to bear the brunt even though many governments have ratified conventions and international legal instruments on women's rights. Often, however these have not been enacted into national laws. Moreover many women are ignorant of the existence of laws that recognize their rights and can be invoked for their protection. About three-quarters of the world's 20 million refugees are women and their dependants.

The 1996 National report of Burundi referred to abuses committed by soldiers in the commune of Gasorwe leading to the death of 200 civilians, most of whom were women and children.

Analysis and research on refugees issues estimated the population of internally displaced persons to be 16 million including 4.5 million in the Sudan, 300,000 in Chad: more than 1 million in Ethiopia; 825,000 in Angola; 2 Million in Mozambique: at least 1 million in Liberia: 2 million in Somalia: 4.2 million in South Africa and half a million in Uganda. (Center for policy and research on refugees' issues, 1992 p 2)

As regards the availability of reliable data there is little or no data that has been generated by Government or United Nations agencies on the actual situation of Women in the Peace process in the last five years. It is recommended that for the coming five years emerging data should be gender desegregated in order to show the impact of war and internal conflict on women and men. This will strengthen advocacy activities. Data and research should also be developed to show what has been the impact of women in peace processes, and whether it led to sustainable peace.

## **4.0 GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED**

The PFA calls for Governments to establish National machineries for the implementation of the platform. There is also a call for collaborative efforts between NGO's and Government agencies. There have been several national initiatives to increase the participation of women in the National Peace processes. In selected African Countries that have experienced conflicts, women's groups have taken up bold and effective strategies to ensure their participation in the peace process. During the inter-Agency Best Practices in Peace Building and Non-Violent Conflict Resolution Conference in Addis Ababa in 1998, several case studies were revealed.

In Liberia, women organized themselves effectively through two national networks to influence the peace process. After the active participation of women, a long-term sustainable peace process was developed that was inclusive of both women and men.

In Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia and Northwest Somalia various women's movements for Peace was formed to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflicts. In Rwanda, women's action was centred on influencing the central political process.

In the Republic of Congo, women participated in the development of two peace pacts, namely those of 1994 and 1997.

In Mali the participation of women in an internal conflict involving the Northern Tuareg peoples has played an important role in reconciliation and restoration of trust between the communities. The experience of Liberian women in the peace talks held in Accra, Ghana where they organized a delegation of six women to make a forced entry into the 1994 Accra Clarifications Conference, demonstrates that Governments and regional bodies may still be gender-biased against women in peace initiatives. Yet the strategic presence at the conference gave the women a high visibility through the print and electronic media. The Governments of Liberia and Burundi also took steps to include the participation of women in the peace building process. The Liberian government supported a woman Interim President who was instrumental in negotiating the lasting peace that this country enjoys today.



Recognition should be given to the following Governments who supported women in their respective countries to participate in peace building initiatives: Sudan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, and the Republic of Congo, Mali and Burundi. These countries have taken on-board the issues and concerns of women peace activists in their national efforts for reconstruction.

#### **4.2 ASSESSMENT OF THE STRATEGIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS**

Despite these successful efforts to increase and strengthen the participation of women peace networks in order to build their capacity to influence regional peace initiatives, Governments should follow-up their commitments with concrete action through legislation and policy so as to ensure that women are included in all structures of conflict resolution and peace building.

Legislative or policy changes in any of the countries that supports the permanent inclusion of women in the Peace process is crucial. Countries should establish effective national machineries through which women can access these processes. In many instances Women have had to lobby intensely for visibility and inclusion. At times, existing national machinery may not be an effective institution for the promotion of women's rights. Perhaps it will be necessary for the Governments to legislate stronger conditions such as the inclusion of "affirmative action" in all institutions of decision making. This will ensure that at all levels women are not excluded from being part of decisions that affect them. The national machinery will certainly be more effective with legislative and financial support.

At the international level there are several mechanisms that are used to monitor and follow-up the implementation of the global Platform for Action. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), was mandated by the General Assembly to play a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing PFA. Since 1995, CSW has systematically addressed each of the 12 areas of the PFA. In 1998, the Commission for the Advancement of Women examined the following key areas: Violence against women, Women and armed conflict, Human rights of women and the Girl child. The CSW has also been assigned to be the preparatory body for organizing the special session of the UN on Beijing +5 which is scheduled for June 2000.

#### **4.3 HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES ALLOCATED BY THE UN AGENCIES AND PARTNERS TOWARDS PEACE INITIATIVES BY WOMEN**

Resources for peace initiatives have come from different sources. Various foreign partners have supported specific activities relating to building women's capacity to participate in peace processes. Some of the resources allocated over the last five years include:

- The Netherlands Government provided US\$ 860,000.00 for capacity building of grassroots work and training women on peace building skills. The support was for phase one of the peace project.
- UNIFEM provided AFWIC project with US\$ 1,000,000.00 for activities to be undertaken between 1999-2001.
- The Swedish Government provided financial support totalling US\$ 430,000.00 towards capacity building of peace movements in Burundi during the years 1998-2000.
- The Italian Government provided financial support totalling US\$250,000.00 for peace mainstreaming in the Arusha peace process for Burundi.
- The Netherlands Government provided support amounting to US\$ 250,000.00 for Somalia women in the peace process from 1998-1999.
- The United Nations Human Rights Commission has appointed a Special Rapporteur on the elimination of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and the girl child as well as appointing a special rapporteur on systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery like practices during armed conflict.
- The office of the High Commission for Human Rights is also supporting the campaign for the universal ratification of the Women's Convention (CEDAW) and the removal of substantive reservations. Through the United Nations Technical Co-operation Program in the Field of Human Rights, the agency provides a program that addresses training for police officers, peacekeepers and human rights monitors.

However, funds allocated and effectiveness of the mechanisms and procedures established to mobilize resources to fully implement the activities that were elaborated in

the two Platforms have not been as expected. In most cases, the resources allocated for Peace initiatives are not adequate. UNIFEM and UNHCR, the ECA and the OAU need more resources in order that they become more effective and be empowered financially to carry out their work. It is also noted that there was no data available in the National Government reports on the financial resources used in any of the peace initiatives undertaken in the respective countries.

## **5.0 MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING & EVALUATION**

### **5.1 MECHANISMS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY VIS-A VIS WOMEN AS BENEFICIARIES**

In addition to the national machineries and African peace networks, other mechanisms have been set up at international and regional levels to accelerate effective implementation of the PFA.

In 1997 the UN Secretary General appointed his Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict. Through this initiative the Secretary General facilitated the realization of the African Platform for Action which calls for special attention to be paid to the plight of the Girl-child. The African Platform for Action recognizes that the girl child in Africa has special needs. The Special Representative's office will be making reports to demonstrate the harsh environment that the African girl child is raised in.

Through the ongoing negotiations for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC), it is hoped that they will accelerate the promotion and protection of human rights, especially women rights. The Women's caucus that includes representatives from African women's organizations has presented major legal reforms to ensure that the Vienna treaty was useful for women. As sexual violence during armed conflict has been ignored for too long, providing a legal framework within the new ICC's jurisdiction to end such impunity is key to women. The women's caucus sought to incorporate a gender perspective throughout the ICC statute, by ensuring that structural and procedural mechanisms are incorporated and also that gender based crimes were effectively investigated to bring about successful prosecutions. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is a direct implementation of strategic objective E.3 145 (d) of the Platform for Action.

There is also a lot of hope that the establishment of the African Women Committee on Peace and Development will ensure that women are active participants in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction. The establishment of the Committee has taken long. The recommendation for its establishment was made in 1993 during the Pan African Women's Conference on Peace in Kampala. The Committee however requires adequate authority

and finance to be effective in making a difference to the participation of women in the Peace process. It is at present supported by the ECA and the OAU.

## **5.2 MECHANISMS FOR CONSULTATION AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND NGOS.**

The PFA calls for closer collaboration between Governments and Non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Platform. The development and implementation of the National plans of action should be a joint initiative that promotes collaboration. This has successfully been carried out by some of the African Governments and Non-governmental organizations.

## **6.0 RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS, CONFERENCES AND OTHER CONSULTATIONS ORGANIZED AT THE REGIONAL, SUB-REGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS.**

### **6.1 EXPERTS GROUP/WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FORUM FOR PEACE**

From 4th-8th November 1996 a forum of experts was organized in Johannesburg, South Africa to deliberate on the mechanisms for increasing women's participation in the Peace process. The forum was guided by the recommendations of the Kampala Platform for Action (1994), which, among other things, calls for the establishment of a Committee of African Women Ministers and Plenipotentiaries to be involved in policy and mechanisms of conflict prevention, management and resolution of the highest organs of the OAU and UNECA. It was recommended that the committee would be autonomous with a joint OAU/ECA secretariat for a specified period of time.

### **6.2 CONFERENCE ON PEACE, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT**

From 1st-3rd March 1997 a Pan African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development was held in Kigali. One of the key recommendations from this meeting was to call upon the OAU and UNECA to speed up the appointment of the committee of African women ministers and others to address conflict resolutions within the highest policy level in the continent.

### **6.3 PEACE MISSION TO BURUNDI**

In December 1997, a high level African Women's Peace Mission went to Burundi to facilitate the peace process in the country. This mission contributed to building the internal capacity of Burundi to solve its internal conflicts in a peaceful manner.

### **6.4 AFRICAN WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) was set up in April 1998 and officially launched on 11th November 1998 in Addis Ababa. The Committee is a joint initiative between the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Among other things, the AWCPD is charged with advising the Secretary-General of the OAU and the Executive Secretary of the ECA on issues of mainstreaming women's concerns and a gender perspective into peace and development initiatives in the continent. There are two main plans to this broad mandate of the AWCPD. The first one is to facilitate the effective involvement of the

women of Africa in advocacy for alternative options to war and violence. The other is to promote the increased participation of women in decision-making, particularly in relation to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and other matters of war and peace and thereby inculcate and nurture a culture of peace and peace-building.

As indicated in the minutes of the first and second meetings of the Committee held in 1998 and 1999, the AWCPD has taken peace initiatives and interventions in several African countries, namely: Burundi, Congo, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and South Africa.

### **6.5 AFRICAN FIRST LADIES FORUM**

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, a significant initiative undertaken was the establishment of the African First Ladies Forum. The purpose of this Forum was to consider the peace situation on the continent. The First Ladies sent a mission to Burundi in 1996 with the aim of appealing to the leaders to stop the internal conflict. The Forum has held several regional meetings. In 1996 in Abuja, Nigeria they developed the "Abuja Declaration of Africa's First Ladies on Peace and Humanitarian issues". During their second forum the following year they held the First West African First Ladies Meeting in Accra Ghana from 27th-28th July 1998. The meeting noted the importance of the African continent addressing its own problems and that there was need to solve conflicts expeditiously in order to minimize the high human and economic cost of conflict. In their Plan of Action, the First Ladies, inter alia, decided to work with the ECOWAS Committee of Seven on Guinea Bissau; to offer their services to the Government of Sierra Leone; and to enlist in each country mechanisms and institutions to mobilize relief and humanitarian assistance for victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone. The First Ladies also committed themselves to advocate and promote the political, economic and social empowerment of women, and to form an inter-governmental group to monitor and periodically review the implementation of the Accra Plan of Action.

### **6.6 ECA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

In April 1998, the Economic Commission for Africa held a regional conference to reflect on forty years since its establishment. The Conference theme was "African Women and Economic Development: Investing in our future." Participants noted that despite the

commitments made by African governments at the Fifth African Regional Conference and the Fourth World Conference on Women, there has not been significant increase in the participation of women in national, sub-regional and regional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

### **6.7 INTER-AGENCY WORKSHOP ON DOCUMENTED BEST PRACTICES OF WOMEN IN PEACE-BUILDING AND NON-VIOLENT MEANS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

To capture the unique contribution of women to peace movements and the non-violent means of conflict resolution in Africa, UNHCR in close collaboration with UNESCO, UNDP, UNIFEM and UNICEF, co-sponsored by the OAU, convened an Inter-Agency Workshop on Documented Best Practices of Women in Peace-Building and Non-Violent means of Conflict Resolution (November 24-26, 1997) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The main objectives of the Workshop were: (i) to provide a forum for established women's peace movements to share information and experiences on best practices concerning women's contribution to peace-building and non-violent means of conflict resolution; (ii) to consolidate partnership with national, regional, international, intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations and individual peace-promoters in order to enhance co-ordination and collaboration in support of women's community level activities on peace-building; (iii) to strength assistance regarding the establishment of effective mechanisms for mainstreaming women's concerns and a gender perspective into peace-negotiations and peace-building; and (iv) to support the active participation of women in decision-making processes.

Participants from various African countries shared experiences in actual conflict situations. Lessons learnt included the following:-

- an institutional framework is necessary for the promotion of women in decision making;
- women's peace movements should be promoted amongst neighbouring countries as regional peace and stability will enhance the likelihood of continued national peace;
- women should integrate positive traditional conflict resolution mechanisms into peace initiatives;
- recruitment of women into peace movements should include grassroots, rural, urban, and various religions, linguistic, social and political groups;
- programmes to sustain peace through peace education in schools and the community must be initiated and strengthened;



- after hostilities have ceased, women's continuing role in sustaining peace must be acknowledged and maintained. Women should not be relegated to the domestic arena

### **6.8 THE PAN-AFRICAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE.**

This Pan-African Women's Conference organized by UNESCO and supported by the OAU and the government of the United Republic of Tanzania was held in Zanzibar, from 17-20 May 1999. The final outcome was the Zanzibar Declaration: Women of Africa for a Culture of Peace. It emphasized the importance of: (i) Women's participation in Peace Promotion (ii) Demilitarization and Disarmament (iii) Networking between African Women's Movements and International Movements (iv) Communication, Information and dissemination (v) Resource mobilization

The Conference urged strongly the OAU, ECA, ADB, the African Women Committee for Peace & Development, all international regional and sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD as well as NGOs, Governments and the donor community, to support and implement the Zanzibar Declaration and the Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa.

### **6.9 SIXTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN:- MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DAKAR & BEIJING PLATFORMS FOR ACTION. (22-26 NOVEMBER, 1999) ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.**

#### **6.9.1 WORKSHOP ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS.**

Here below are some Recommendations from the Workshop of the Conference:

- Governments were called upon to ensure women/s access to decision-making mechanisms, education and training and to national resources by undertaking the following:-
- Ensuring greater access for women in the decision-making process by appointing more women to decision-making mechanisms at the national, sub-regional and international levels (including governments, parliaments and sub-regional, regional and international instants organizations). In this regard, the quota system should be preferred when it is to the advantage of women while continuing to promote the principle of competition between men and women.
- Ensuring the effective representation of women in military institutions, appointing and encouraging more women to become officers at decision-making levels.

- Promulgating laws designed to give effect to the will of governments to involve women in decision making and above all to ensure that the laws are strictly applied.

### **On Education & Training**

- Reforming the school curriculum so as to include programs on culture and peace for school children (i.e. respect for property, tolerance, acceptance of differences, etc.) This program should be based on the specific culture experience of each country.
- Promoting in the schools, in rural areas, refugee camps, teaching of the principles of human rights, as well as the content of international conventions on peace to protect in particular, young people from indoctrination.
- Significantly increasing resource allocations to the education and training sectors and ensuring that women and men have equal access to education.
- Promoting literacy programs for women to expand their understanding of their role in development.
- Promoting the teaching of African Geography in primary schools and the elaboration of Information, education and communication programs to promote solidarity between African countries.

### **On National Resources:**

- Governments should take practical measures to ensure the equitable distribution of national resources by affording women equal access to these resources. In that regard the laws and regulations should be adopted to promote women's access to land ownership. Financial resources and the realization of income generating activities should favour women.

### **On Dialogue, Consultation and Sensitization:**

- Encouraging and promoting women' participation in dialogue and consultation towards peace building. In this connection all discriminatory laws and traditional practices that hamper the involvement in any consultative process or in dialogue should be abolished.
- Establishing sensitization programs for women on their rights guaranteed by the laws and regulations of each country.
- Promulgating laws designed to protect women and children refugees and displaced persons against the following:

- All forms of conflict related violence (rape, forcible recruitment into armed groups, destruction of property, physical mutilation, etc).
- Traditional practices which isolate women from peace processes.
- The dangers inherent in the use of landmines.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

It is commendable that five years after the Beijing Global Conference there have been noticeable developments in the participation of women in the peace-building and conflict resolution processes in Africa. Their inputs in terms of lobbying, peace missions, conferences, recommendations and creating forums and networks at all levels have contributed to advance the just cause of the role and contribution of women in the various aspects of peace building and as vital promoters of the culture of peace. Both Governments, UN Agencies, NGO's and Inter-governmental Regional and Sub-regional organizations and the National Peace networks have contributed human and financial resources and goodwill that has enriched women's significant strides in implementing the calls of the two Platforms to involve women in the peace processes on the continent. It is however an on-going endeavour. Moreover, since the peace-building process still remains a male dominated area, much remains to be done to accelerate and enhance the involvement of women, including the refugees and the internally displaced, in all the processes of conflict prevention, management and resolution.

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