



## **Reflections on The African Women's Decade**

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The African Women's Decade (2010- 2020) to be launched regionally in October 2010, would coincide with the time that the women's movement worldwide is marking significant landmarks on gender equality and the empowerment of women. This year, the world is reviewing thirty years of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), fifteen years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), ten years of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, six years of the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), and five years since the coming into force of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, just to mention, but a few. A pointer to the fact that as far as women's rights in Africa are concerned, we have reached a stage where implementation has to be given greater attention.

The Africa review of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +15), which took place in Banjul in November 2009 paints a grim picture of African countries not meeting their commitments on gender equality. The decade presents a new chance for taking women's rights in Africa to a higher level. One of the first and important steps should be to advocate for the implementation of the mechanisms that our governments have committed to. It is evident that we will make much progress without a framework that highlights what progress if any we are making towards transforming the lives of African women for the better. Advocacy should be accompanied by monitoring progress at different phases of the decade.

Adequate financial and technical resources are very crucial to making dreams come true, therefore approval for setting up a Women's Trust Fund for African women (as agreed by the Heads of State of the AU under the SDGEA), could not have come at a better time. For the African Women's decade to succeed the African Women's Trust Fund should become operational without any further delay. In addition, the gender machineries at the country level, which are mandated with the responsibility of promoting gender equality, should be very well resourced by their governments so that they can carry out their mandates successfully.

Central to these is the need for women to tell their stories themselves. Experience sharing and dissemination of information on good practices would go a long way to avoid duplication. A tracking system to monitor and report on the achievements and progress with regard to the expected output should be developed and shared at the onset for both progress monitoring and evaluation at the end of the decade.

Ten years may give the illusion of a long time, but the reality is that time flies. Before one knows it the decade would have come and gone. It is my sincere hope that at the end of the historic African Women's Decade we would all look back with pride, congratulate and pat ourselves on the back for having made the best use of this unique opportunity. We should hit the ground running.

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