

COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S DECADE (2010-2020) FROM WEST AFRICAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

*Accra, Ghana
September 28-30, 2010*

WE the 47 leaders representing women's human rights organisations, national women's machineries and the media from 12 African countries in the West Africa sub-region¹;

PARTICIPATING in a three- day workshop in Accra, Ghana entitled "*Beyond Beijing +15: Implementing and Resourcing the African Women's Decade (2010-2020)*" organized by the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and Women in Law and Development (WiLDAF- West Africa);

COMMENDING the collaborative efforts of FEMNET, NETRIGHT, AAWORD, and WiLDAF-WA with the support of the government of Ghana and UNIFEM;

UNDERSCORING the objectives of the said workshop listed below as follows:

- **TO DISSEMINATE** and discuss the outcome of the 15 year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) at regional and sub regional level;
- **TO POPULARISE** the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 as an opportunity for states to deliver on their various commitment to women's rights and empowerment;
- **TO CATALYSE** the development of action plans for operationalising the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 at national and regional levels;
- **TO DELIBERATE** on strategies for increasing funding for women's rights agenda in order to deliver on commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment during the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 and;
- **TO EXPLORE** new opportunities for networking and movement building in order to support the work the gender machineries and women's right organisations to deliver on the objectives of the Women's Decade.

¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo.

TAKING COGNISANCE of the outcome of similar sub regional workshops convened by FEMNET in May 2010 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo for Central Africa, and in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in June 2010 for East and Horn of Africa;

WELCOMING the decision of African Union (AU) Heads of State that 2010-2020 will be recognized as the 'African Women's Decade' and launched in Kenya in October, 2010;

MINDFUL of the general goal of the Decade, which is to cascade, in concrete terms, the execution of commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment from the grass-roots, national, regional to continental level;

ALSO WELCOMING the decision by AU Heads of State to establish an African Women's Fund to facilitate realization of the objectives of the Decade;

FOCUSING on the ten themes of the decade which include fighting poverty and promoting economic empowerment of women and entrepreneurship; agriculture and food security; health, maternal mortality and HIV and AIDS; education, science and technology; environment and climate change; peace and security and violence against women; governance and legal protection; finance and gender budgets; women in decision making positions; and young women's movement; and discussing issues around these ten themes;

DEEPLY CONCERNED that 15 years after the Beijing World Conference on Women, and 10 years since States committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), insufficient progress has been registered in West Africa on issues around women's economic empowerment, health, participation in development processes, and representation in decision-making;

DISTURBED that women's issues and machineries charged with women's affairs continue to be marginalized and under-resourced, and this has led to very slow implementation of international and regional commitments made to women's empowerment and gender equality;

FIRMLY CONVINCED that the African Women's Decade needs to bring about **transformative change** in the lives of African women, girls, and the community at large, requiring high level commitment, prioritisation and increased resources from African governments to make sure that women's priorities and concerns are funded and monitored at all levels;

TAKING COGNISANCE of the participation of West African women's organisations in the evaluation process of the Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness and gender equality, adopted during a West African women's consultative meeting in Lomé in June 2008;

WE CALL ON WEST AFRICAN MEMBER STATES TO:

- Develop comprehensive, multi sectoral, **national plans of action** for the African Women's Decade, ensure budgets are allocated to implementing the plans, and further ensure the plans are integrated into the national development plans/ poverty reduction strategy papers;
- Recognise the contributions of African civil society organisations particularly women's rights organisations for the complementary role they are playing to promote gender equality at national, sub regional and regional levels;
- Ensure that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) constitute 50% of organizing committees for the African Women's Decade at all levels;

- Commit significant resources to the African Women’s Fund so that gender machineries and civil society can utilise the resources to meet the goals of the African Women’s Decade;
- Strengthen the national gender machineries to enable them to work in close partnership with women’s rights organisations to develop the plans of action that will respond to the needs of the African Women’s Decade;

RECALLING the recently established United Nations (UN) Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – also known as **UN Women**, which is the result of years of advocacy by the global women’s movement,

WE CALL FOR:

- An immediate increase in the capacity of UN Women offices at country-level in order to support the realisation of the objectives of the African Women’s Decade;
- Systems to be put in place to ensure women’s rights organisations working on the ground can access funding from UN Women in a timely manner for the effective realisation of the goals of the Decade;
- Mechanisms for civil society participation in the governance of UN Women to be put in place as part of the transitional process over the next 3 months;
- UN Country offices to respond to this new architecture by appointing women with the relevant technical competence in the area of women’s rights, gender and development;
- Member States of the United Nations to ensure the agreed threshold of USD 500 million for the UN Women budget is met by January 2011, with plans to scale up to USD 1 Billion to meet the expanded scope and mandate of the agency;

/END
