



ADF TODAY

FOURTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Governance for a Progressing Africa

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Corruption: A two-way street

By Andrew Allimadi, General Rapporteur's Team

A lively debate on corruption and governance constituted the highlight of the third day of ADF IV. Participants said that while corruption was a cancer eating away at African societies, the only way to find a solution was to address the problem from both the supply-side and the demand side.

The Attorney General of Lesotho, Mr. Lebohang Fine-Maema, explained how his country had tackled corruption by attacking both ends of the problem. The most high-profile cases have arisen from the multi-million dollar Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), in which several western companies allegedly paid huge bribes to local managers in order to win contracts. The Attorney General said his country first successfully prosecuted the local director of the project, then turned its attention to the foreign firms.

One Canadian firm was successfully prosecuted for paying US\$ 2 million in bribes to local associates over the project. "The firm was convicted and fined a sum of US\$ 15 million," the attorney general said, to applause from the audience – adding that other European firms were still being prosecuted in relation to the project, including firms from Germany and Italy.

Most people had thought it unfeasible for a small country like Lesotho to take on such huge multinationals. Given the high cost of the process, few partners were initially willing to contribute funds to the litigation. However, in view of the success to date, a number of donors had come forward. The project's success has also had ramifications elsewhere, with the World Bank, for example, re-instituting its programme of barring corrupt companies from bidding for World Bank contracts.

Mr. Fine-Maema pointed to a number of lessons learned as a result of the Lesotho litigation: companies and individuals who solicit and receive bribes can be successfully prosecuted; corruption is clearly not just an African problem but also exists in industrial countries; those who bribe tend to stick together so it is difficult to obtain information; and it is important to get the cooperation of others. Lesotho succeeded in securing cooperation from Switzerland, which provided details of bank accounts where the illicit gains were deposited.

Other participants applauded Lesotho's success and agreed that one sure way to reduce corruption is if perpetrators know they can be caught. Nevertheless, the conference acknowledged that corruption remains a big problem on the continent. In order to illustrate the problem, one delegate recalled the

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K. K. insists on better leadership

By Aaron Mweewa

Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA) Patron Kenneth Kaunda says that good governance is the panacea for almost all the problems that the African continent is facing. He told ADF Today that once Africa addresses its governance problems almost all its problems will effectively be sorted out.

He has since advised the delegates attending ADF IV to look at governance as a critical component of development, which should be seen in terms of human life. He commended ECA for releasing the report on governance saying that it is an important tool that should help the countries that are not doing well currently. He said governance is all about human life and how it is managed.

Most development programmes that are initiated fail to succeed because they lack a human face. "Good governance coupled with love is what is needed for a progressive Africa," he added. The worst atrocities that Africa has experienced could not have taken place if the governors had love for the people they govern. "Africa should get rid of its leaders propagating misrule if it is to develop at an accelerated pace," he said.

On the fight for gender equality, Dr. Kaunda said since women are critical in the nurturing of human life they need to be in the forefront of any struggle for Africa. "Even during the liberation struggle on the continent it was the women who contributed so much, some of them to the point of death," he said. "I must say it is extremely important for government leaders to take seriously foras like the ADF and to implement whatever resolutions are passed because a lot of monetary and human resources are spent when organizing," he suggests. He said the only way such conferences are going to make sense to the average person on the street was by the implementation of good policies.

Commenting on Tony Blair's Commission for Africa initiative, Dr. Kaunda said it has become increasingly difficult for him to



Dr. Kenneth Kaunda

trust and believe in Blair after the war in Iraq. "By going to war with Iraq the two B's (Tony Blair and George Bush) went wrong miserably but I still remain hopeful that they will recover from the tragedy," he lamented.

"I used to love and respect Blair" Dr. Kaunda continued. When Blair came into power he wrote a poem in his honor, entitled: "A star is born to us."

Dr. Kaunda is currently the patron of CHGA, which is currently holding its third commissioners meeting parallel to the ADF. The Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance is a UN system-wide initiative, launched in February 2003 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to complement the vital work on prevention being done by UN and other agencies and that charts the way forward on HIV/AIDS and governance in Africa. Dr. Kaunda said he accepted the offer to be patron because he sees it as a service to humanity.

Tempers flare at Media and Governance session

By Kennedy Mambwe

Tempers flared at the close of the Media and Governance session Thursday when a Zimbabwean delegate took offence at the rapporteur's mention of his country as one of those who are actively eroding the rights of journalists in Africa.

Enraged by the observation, Dr. Tafataona Mahoso, Executive Chairman of the Media and Information Commission in Zimbabwe demanded that panellists justify why they felt that Zimbabwe was particularly bad at upholding the rights of journalists. Pressed for time as the session had already run over by half an hour, the moderator refused to reopen the discussion, especially since the reference to Zimbabwe was made in the context of a larger discussion on freedom in Africa.

South African journalist Audrey Brown, who had raised the issue, felt that the point needed to be made about the status of journalists in countries like Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea. Less than pleased with the panellist's reasoning, the Zimbabwe official insisted on an explanation why, out of the 54 countries on the continent, only two could be labeled as bad elements.

Later in an interview, Brown maintained it was public knowledge that journalists' rights in Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea were being trampled upon: "These Governments have put measures in place that are making it very dangerous for journalists to do their work properly."

In his defense for causing the row, Mahoso contended Brown should have given a summary of issues raised on the floor, rather than raising new controversies. "That is a very dishonest way to handle a meeting. It is against any UN meeting procedures. It is ridiculous to identify two countries out of the 54 on the continent because of prejudices," he said. "This is the reason we are fighting these falsehoods published in the so-called Good Governance Report."

Dr. Mahoso defended his Government's move to impose stiff measures to regulate the press in his country, saying journalists had been very irresponsible over the past 24 years. "Journalists have failed to regulate themselves despite making incessant promises to do so for many years. That is the reason why Government stepped in to regulate. Journalists have been used by foreign countries to spread falsehoods about Zimbabwe. You cannot sacrifice the lives of your people just because journalists say they are free," the Zimbabwean official argued.

Senior Reuters correspondent in South Africa, Manohar Eshipisu, who made a keynote presentation on Media and Governance, said Brown as rapporteur had the right to express her personal view on the matter within the context of the meeting. He said Zimbabwe were in the meeting but did not contribute in any other way except to complain about the reference by Miss Brown. "Engaging in a shouting match at the end of the meeting is not the best way

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Editorial

Corruption and Good Governance in Africa

The problem of corruption remains a major challenge to good governance in Africa as confirmed by the African Governance Report, a ground-breaking study conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Corruption continues to undermine state institutions, weakens economic management, erodes public confidence in the political leadership, promotes poor service delivery and impoverishes society. The poor are usually the major victims of corruption as resources targeted for their needs are often misappropriated and do not really get to serve their demands. As such, corruption perpetuates poverty and retards economic growth.

In the 28 countries surveyed by the ECA report, the general perception of the ordinary people is that corruption ranks among the three main national problems that their governments have to confront head on. The other problems the people considered of high priority are unemployment and poverty. The findings of the ECA study are in line with that of Transparency International (TI). In its 2003 corruption perception ratings many African countries performed very poorly, scoring below the average point of 5, which is TI's minimum point for gauging corruption. Africa's best example in the TI corruption index is Tunisia, yet the country still performed below average, with a score of 4.9. Four African countries—Cameroon, Angola, Kenya and Nigeria are amongst the 12 countries considered in the TI rating to be among the most corrupt countries in the world with a score of below 2.

Corruption is a cross-sectoral problem in African countries. The civil service, the executive, judges, public prosecutors, tax officials, elected legislators and councilors, the police and private sector agents are all indicted. From the results of the household survey of the ECA report in which the ordinary people were asked to rank the different public agents and actors with regard to corruption, the police are the most culpable in bribe and corruption (60%), followed by the tax officials (41%), judges (39), public prosecutors (37%), elected legislators/ councilors (25%), and traditional rulers (24%).

Corruption persists not because of lack of efforts to combat it, but those efforts are

not enough and not well targeted. Many African countries have established anti-corruption commissions and in some other countries such as Nigeria and South Africa there are two or more agencies established to tackle the issue of corruption. Also, in many countries civil society organizations are springing up to serve as watchdogs to check the abuse of office and corruption by public officials. In Mali, there are no less than four civil society groups established primarily to fight corruption, yet corruption still flourishes and remains endemic.

What is to be done? The fight against corruption in Africa must not be a one-stop event, but a continuous process requiring both national and international efforts and cooperation. At the national level, it requires building institutions for effective public regulation. These include the legislature, judiciary, police, audit departments, Ombudsman, anti-corruption commissions, the office of the auditor-general and civil society. Corruption flourishes because public regulatory institutions are weak and lack autonomy. Those institutions must have strong internal mechanisms of control, accountability, transparency and public scrutiny. African countries must endeavour to pay their public servants "living wages" as a safeguard against corrupt practices by public servants.

At the international level, Africa's development partners must demand accountability and good corporate conduct from their firms operating in Africa. They must establish and enforce minimum standards of corporate practice, with which those firms must comply. Heavy sanctions should be imposed on firms that violate this law. More often, foreign firms are usually collaborators with public officials in perpetrating fraud, circumventing laws, and evading tax. In addition, Western countries should consider the publication and repatriation of ill-gotten wealth lodged in western banks by African leaders and public officials and also evolve new banking norms that would prevent western banks from being safe havens for funds illegally acquired. Adequate scrutiny of their clients and their sources of deposits, should be insured.

Parliamentarians and governance focus group

By Cristina R Muller

Parliamentarians attending this Focus Group came from Zambia, Uganda, Botswana, South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Chad, Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, and Sierra Leone. Other persons attending represented institutions from South Africa, Canadian Development Cooperation (CIDA), German Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the World Bank, the University of Dar es Salaam and ECA.

The elected Chairperson of the Focus Group was the Hon. Justice E.K. Cowan, from Sierra Leone. He was assisted by the Secretary-General of the African Parliamentary Union, Abdelgar Abdalla (Tunisia), and the Secretary-General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Kasaka Mutukwa (Zambia), both former elected Parliamentarians in their countries of origin.

It was decided by the group that their objective would be to find ways in which ECA could assist Parliaments in Africa to exercise their elected power. Several Parliamentarians discussed the difficulties they faced in their respective countries. In common, all of the discussants expressed enormous frustration with the application of a system of checks and balances, primarily with regard to the Executive.

The representative of the SADC Parliamentary Forum reminded participants that in many cases elected Parliaments are mandated to monitor budgetary processes, write and approve legislation, promote and protect government, as well as strengthen its institutions. But in some cases, Parliaments have no clearly defined mandate.

A Parliamentarian from Kenya reminded those present that many African nations were moving away from the previous

tradition of totalitarian regimes, where Parliaments were merely 'rubberstamp' institutions, enacting laws that serve the interests of individuals and do not promote the common good.

Another key concern was the issue of financial independence from the Executive. To the discussants, it is crucial that Parliaments acquire and manage their own budget.

Capacity building in the areas of finance and budget was considered of the utmost importance. It was noted that many Parliamentarians are not sufficiently specialized to follow the national budget, and require training in that sector.

The funding of political parties was considered another crucial area of interest, as there is a general concern that weak opposition results in imposition of the interests of the Executive on the Legislature.

The Focus Group suggested that ECA contribute in the following areas:

- Establish a Parliamentary Index of core areas of intervention, in order to clearly demonstrate what is lacking and what can be strengthened;
- Build capacity for Parliamentarians as well as parliamentary staff in the areas of finance, technology, drafting of legislation, and communication;
- Promote internal parliamentary reform to ensure that Parliamentarians work to promote and protect good governance; and
- Promote inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The money for good governance projects is ready says ADB

By Aaron Mweva

The African Development Bank (ADB) says it stands ready to help any country with finances that seek to implement programmes on good governance after the resolutions and declarations at the ADF are concluded.

"The Bank has enough resources in our normal operations at its disposal to help the respective government to implement various viable initiatives of good governance," Director of Operation Policies and Review Department, Philibert Afrika, has said. He adds however that the ADB on its own cannot sort out all the financial woes that the continent is currently facing.

He told ADF Today in an interview that he is keen to reclaim the name the Bank had as the leading institution in working on areas related to governance in Africa when it adopted its new policies in 1999.

He said the Bank wants to help countries in areas relating to judicial reforms, stakeholder participation, transparency and fighting against corruption, so as to achieve good governance.

Mr. Afrika said that ADB is interested in working with ECA even beyond the ADF because it appreciates that good governance is a key ingredient for sustainable economic growth.

The Governance Report does not only indicate that Africa has made significant strides in working towards good governance but also that more still has to be done, in such areas as improving stakeholder participation in governance, making the judicial system more efficient and reducing the levels of corruption.

"We want to work directly with the various countries because we believe that the programmes can only succeed if they have local ownership," he said.

ADB recently celebrated its 40th anniversary and wants to increase its lending capacity so that it can help Africa reduce the high poverty levels. "We have come a long way; this year we have been able to lend almost \$US 3 billion but we want to expand so that we can work on more projects," Mr. Afrika said.

Indeed, the Bank has come a long way in its four decades of existence. It started its operations in 1967 with a modest capital base of 250 million and 33 subscribed regional members. Today its capital stands at \$US32.5 billion and its membership has increased to 77 countries, including not only all African countries but the major countries of the Americas, Europe, and Asia as

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Civil Society shows the way in achieving mine ban

Peter Moszynski

This week's deaths of two British aid workers in Sudan's troubled Darfur region, killed when their vehicle hit a landmine, demonstrates the continuing problems the continent still faces from these hidden killers. Africa remains the most mine-polluted area on earth.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction, as the Ottawa Protocol is officially known, is the first treaty in history to ban an entire class of weapons. It is remarkable in that it was a civil society initiative, based on a coalition of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the Red Cross, numerous medical charities such as Handicap International, organizations such as Human Rights Watch and specialist UN agencies.

The protocol was first signed on 18 September 1997 and came into force in March 1999, after forty countries had ratified. To date, 143 countries have ratified, with the notable exceptions of the United States, Russia and China.

The ICBL warns that despite success in achieving a ban: "A global mine crisis remains and there is still a lot to be done before we live in a mine-free world... It is estimated that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance each year. That means there are some 1,500 new casualties each month, more than 40 new casualties a day, at least two new casualties per hour."

Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Jody Williams, one of the leading figures in the ICBL, told ADF Today: "Part of the reason the international community embraced the idea of the mine ban was because a solution seemed 'do-able.' By working together, it is possible to clean up the landmine mess."

"When the movement to ban landmines was in its infancy, very few, including those who conceived of it, ever expected the tremendous successes it would achieve," Williams recalled, adding "but now is not the time for complacency."

She explained that the Mine Ban Treaty Review Conference was being held in Nairobi next month because Africa was the most "mine-affected continent" and to underscore "the importance of African leadership in bringing the Treaty into being and offering hope to millions around the world for a world free of landmines".

Williams concluded that high level African representation was critical at the Nairobi Summit: "because it signals how committed a government is to keep fighting the scourge of antipersonnel landmines."

Last month, a three-day preparatory meeting was hosted by the African Union in Addis Ababa, intending to establish an action plan for ridding the continent of landmines in advance of the Nairobi Review Conference. The summit aimed to assist victims on the continent, speed up clearance, ensure the destruction of stockpiles and apply pressure on governments to accept the ban on antipersonnel mines. The UN points out that "Sub-Saharan Af-



Deminers at a Dan Church Aid training school in Sudan's Nuba Mountains

Photo: Peter Moszynski

rica is the most heavily mined region in the world. Millions of people are at risk and thousands of square kilometres affected, thwarting economic growth."

The Austrian Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Wolfgang Petritsch, who is chairing next month's Nairobi Summit says: "We must eliminate this weapon. A lot has been achieved but much more needs to be done. The human devastation of this weapon is immense, as is the extent to which it poses a significant obstacle to social and economic development."

He points out that Ethiopia is one of only five African countries yet to ratify the Ottawa Convention - the others being Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Somalia. Petritsch urges them to ratify and send a signal to

the world that they are serious about combating the deadly effects of antipersonnel landmines.

The ICBL says: "In many of the mine-affected countries in the region, medical facilities and rehabilitation services are in poor condition, mostly due to a lack of financial resources. Armed conflict, whether ongoing or in the past, has also taken a heavy toll on the health infrastructure in several countries. In many African countries the assistance available for landmine survivors' rehabilitation and reintegration into society is hopelessly inadequate."

The Nairobi Summit for a Mine-Free World takes place from 29 November to 3 December 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Interview with Olara Otunnu UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

Q: Promoting and protecting children exposed to war is your brief. How come you are not rapping errant African leaders over the knuckles?

Increasingly warfare in Africa is about destroying entire communities and societies. Warfare used to be about warriors fighting warriors, not killing children and women and the elderly who are not armed. There is now a complete free-for-all with no boundaries and this is destroying African societies. Also, in many African societies, I tell our leaders I cannot think of one example where children would simply be pressed from any age and, overnight, be sent to the battlefield to fight. Today we see entire generations of children being destroyed by those presiding over war, pressing them to go and fight the wars of adults.

Q: What are you doing about it, how are you - the UN chief protector of children - confronting these African leaders, elected or not, some of whom people say should be branded criminals?

A: Good governance comes into this, because the source of all this is the breakdown of governance and bad leadership, whether on the side of the state or on the side of rebel groups. These are leaders who have lost any sense of care and loyalty to their own people. That's where the issue of governance comes in. It's only recently that

the UN Security Council put the issue of children on its agenda. Now, ensuring the protection and the well-being of children is part and parcel of the peace and security agenda of the Security Council. And, over the last three years, the UN now identifies by name - in very specific terms - parties to conflict; not countries, not states, but parties which can be a government party, or a rebel group that continues to abuse and brutalise children. Naming and shaming is a big step forward.

Q: Some African examples?

A: From Liberia to Cote d'Ivoire to Sudan to Uganda and to Sierra Leone before. To Congo, to Somalia: think of any major war in Africa and the chances are that those parties are involved in abusing and brutalising children. Their names - whether government army or rebel group - are on that list, which we are updating now for submission to the Security Council. I hope that they will be accused and exposed in the court of international public opinion. And, of course, we have the International Criminal Court in place now. Most of what I'm describing are crimes of war: to rape and use grave sexual violence against a girl is a crime of war. To attack a school or a hospital is a crime of war. To use any person below the age of 15, to recruit them as child soldiers, is a crime of war. The ICC can hold individuals who are held responsible for hav-



Olara Otunnu addresses ADF IV

Photo: UNECA/A. Florent

ing perpetrated these crimes of war.

Q: But do these deterrents lead to changes in behaviour and to the freedom of children?

A: Some of these crimes are so abominable they are simply unacceptable. Exposure is one means through which we hope to influence their conduct, put them on the defensive and denounce them and thereby elicit their change of conduct in favour of the protection of children. It's not the only means, but it's one.

Q: Is behaviour changing - are these warring leaders listening?

A: We have got to challenge these leaders directly. It doesn't matter whether they're government leaders, a president or a rebel leader. We should just look at their practice and their conduct, not their status. If they are destroying our societies, if they are destroying our children - the future of those societies - if they are compromising the future of Africa, we should call them to order, beginning at the local level all the way to the international level.

Q: But isn't agreement from them just political expediency because these leaders know they're under the gun?

A: One thing works in our favour; the fact that the world has become so inextricably interdependent. Not even the fighting groups - whether they are rebels or states - are islands unto themselves in today's world. To successfully prosecute their war efforts, they need arms and hard currency, most of which comes from outside. Many of them depend for revenue on illicit sale of natural resources from within their territory. They also know that, in today's world, part of political legitimacy derives from acceptance by the broader international community. So, since they want to be Mr Prime Minister and Mr President tomorrow, they realize that, in today's world, part of that depends on how they are perceived and viewed in the broader international community.



Focus on the 7th African Regional Conference on Women

Women peace it together *By Florence Machio*

War is most often a boy's game, but women in Africa are now showing the red card to the generals. They have gone to great lengths to maintain peace and stop conflicts from erupting, the ongoing Beijing+10 meeting and the conflict in the Great Lakes region meeting in Rwanda, have heard.

Speaking at the Beijing +10 review meeting and highlighting the progress and challenges facing women ten years after the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, Josephine Ouedraogo, Director of the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD) noted that one of the biggest challenges in Africa at the moment is that wars are still started by men.

She noted however that African women are not just counting losses but the strides taken by women in initiating peace. She pointed to the exemplary contributions of Nobel Laureate Prof. Wangari Maathai and also the efforts of the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD) "These women have contributed to peace in the field, using unconventional methods that work".

Women's initiatives for peace in Africa have continued to grow as women realize that they suffer so much from war, while their male counterparts fight to score points against each other.

As a backdrop to these sentiments, she noted an injustice happening next door in Sudan. According to a recent report by the Sudan Organization Against Torture, Zubaïda Rabih Abdalla, a well-known activist in Sudan was arrested and tortured and is now awaiting trial. Someone arrested earlier was found with a letter from Mrs. Abdalla to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, which is currently negotiating a power-sharing deal with the Government in Khartoum to end Africa's longest conflict. Abdalla is well known in the Nuba Mountains for her activism and peace initiatives in Sudan.

Ouedraogo said it is a shame that women involved in peace initiatives without taking sides can be thus treated and must live in fear. She urged governments and warring factions to allow and facilitate women's initiation of and participation in peace processes.

In this scenario, many women in war-torn countries are being forced to go to war and fight alongside the men, to achieve peace and safety in the long run.

The representative from Congo acknowledged the work of Congolese women in bringing about peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He said: "Women in Congo are grouping themselves to initiate peace yet their work is not being



Peace activist in the Nuba Mountains

Photo: Peter Mwanjisi

recognized." He added that such participation and recognition would yield tangible and visible results. Several speakers agreed that it is high time that women's skillful contribution to conflict resolution be used, a sentiment being echoed at the women's meeting in Rwanda on conflict in the Great Lakes area, and in their statement issued to the leaders of the subregion.

The women meeting in Rwanda expressed deep concern with the multi-dimensional

conflicts in the Great Lakes region, which they said had resulted in untold suffering of communities especially for women and children, and the loss of human life.

The women have called for the enactment and enforcement of legislation that protects and upholds the human rights and dignity of all females. Among other declarations, the women also urged Heads of State and Government to provide adequate resources for effective implementation of all women and children's rights and peace and security instruments.

Women's contribution to the establishment of the Mano River Union Basin Peace Initiative; the Women of the Great Lakes Peace Initiative; the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) are important examples of women's contribution to the peace process.

The Mano River Initiative received an award from the UN Secretary General in 2003 for its role in protecting human rights. In Rwanda, Burundi, Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo women have been active in peace building reconstruction. In Rwanda, after the genocide, the Government set up a fund to give assistance to the survivors, among whom women and orphans were the majority.

All these achievements relay one fact: Women are not going to sit back as the men and boys play the game called war.

Violence against women condemned *By Jamillab Mwanjisi*

Years ago, women believed being beaten was part of being loved. Today, however, women understand that love does not include violence and that is why more women are reporting cases of domestic violence.

Africa has registered more gender-based violence in the last decade than in the past. Kenya, Zambia, Swaziland and South Africa for instance, have reported a high incidence of domestic violence. Some experts believe this is because more women have a higher level of understanding of their rights since the successful convening of the Beijing process.

"I call this a positive-negative development," said Cherly Gillwald, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Correctional Services. "Positive in the sense that women are aware of their rights and they are seeking help. Women believe in their justice system. This is a good sign. Its negative because the numbers are still so very high."

Minister Gillwald said that before South Africa attained democracy in 1994, gender-based violence cases were almost absent from national statistics. Few women were speaking out on gender violence and much fewer were crying for help. Today, however, women have access to justice and support systems, and are using them more.

Gender-based violence was on the agenda of discussions at the Beijing+10 Ministerial Conference taking place here as part of

the African Development Forum (ADF IV) organized by ECA on "Governance for a progressing Africa".

Due to extensive campaigns to raise awareness on gender-based violence, women understand they have the right to safety and to be not abused. They know gender-based violence is not a purely domestic issue and that they can seek support and protection.

Sixteen days of activism in this area have helped many countries in Africa to raise awareness on gender-based violence. In South Africa, experts have used the opportunity to redefine gender-based violence to include a broader perspective of psychological, economic and physical abuse.

These days not only is awareness raised among women men and children at all levels, but they are also urged to participate in eradicating gender-based violence. "We all have an important role to play. We have realized that its very unhelpful to cast men as the perpetrators of violence only. They have to feel they are key players in this fight; they have to be part of the solution in the debate."

Despite all the efforts made to raise awareness, involve men and create support systems, the incidence of gender-based violence against the women of Africa has not changed much.

In Central African Republic, 45 per cent of the women are victims of physical violence, especially in the household. In rural

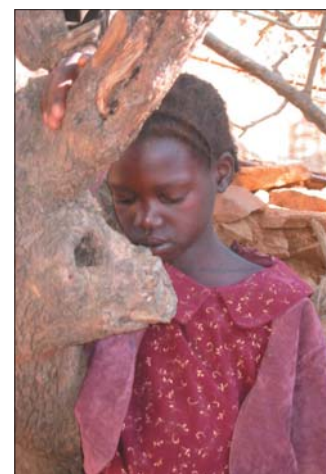
areas in Mali, forced marriages, which is classified, as violence against women, is as high as 80 per cent. Female genital mutilation is still high in many parts of Africa and is also considered violence against women.

And yet African governments are still toying with ratifying important documents such as the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women, adopted in Maputo. Only four out of the 53 States that adopted the Protocol more than a year ago have just signed it.

The Protocol, which activists have praised as a "positive step" towards ending violence and discrimination against women, may still be in people's briefcases. "We still have a long way to go," said Suzan Nkomo from the President's Office, on the status of women in South Africa. "Unless we get rid of other forms of violence in Africa, gender-based violence will continue."

According to Nkomo, Africa has a history of violence and this has translated into household encounters where women are the major victims. Therefore, protocols and other international documents may be helpful but major changes will only come if we change the focus of our discussion. "Our agenda has to be that of peace. If all of us have a vested interest in peace, then together we can fight gender-based violence," she said

Nkomo added that the challenge for Af-



Gender-based violence has increased in Africa

Photo: Peter Mwanjisi

rican States today is how to make African women trust and rely on their governments. The only way is to strengthen the capacity of government institutions to work for women. "How can we make institutions work for women? How can they make us feel safe—this is the challenge."

This is indeed one of the biggest challenges and not only for gender activists but also for African Heads of States who continue to exclude women and women's issues from major decisions. Women are still left in corridors at major conferences where they have to lobby for entry and to get their concerns included on the agenda.



Focus on the 7th African Regional Conference on Women

Feminization of poverty: A key issue at Beijing + 10

By Aaron Mweewa

The Beijing + 10 Conference NGO Forum Chairperson, Gladys Mutukwa, says it is sad that 10 years after the 1995 Beijing Conference, women in Africa are poorer than they were then. Miss Mutukwa notes that, from the current situation, it is clear that poverty in Africa has become feminized. She said most of the poor people on the continent are women.

The majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1 dollar a day or less are women. In addition, the gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "the feminization of poverty. Worldwide, women earn on average slightly more than 50 per cent of what men earn.

Women living in poverty are often denied access to critical resources such as credit, land and inheritance. Their labour goes unrewarded and unrecognized. Their health care and nutritional needs are not given priority; they lack sufficient access to education and support services, and their participation in decision-making at home and in the community is minimal. Caught in the cycle of poverty, women lack access to resources and services to change their situation.

Annetta Woodburn, a participant at the conference, laments: "I find it increasingly difficult to survive on a low income. Watching every penny is soul destroying."

To compound the situation, Mrs. Mary Ouedraogo adds: "Jobs that are ideal for us mothers with children are always at the bot-

tom of the scale. You tend to get stuck there doing basic jobs so you can't really move up the ladder if you work part-time."

The Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 identified eradication of the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern requiring special attention and action by the international community, governments and civil society.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women discussed the issue of women and poverty at its fortieth session in 1996, and proposed further action to be taken by UN member States and the international community, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all poverty eradication policies and programmes.

Among the agreed conclusions of the session were measures aimed to ensure that all women have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child-bearing, widowhood, disability and old age; and that women, men and society share responsibilities for child and other dependant care.

In Beijing in 1995, much was discussed about women and poverty and many decisions were made on the way forward. Why then does the woman still find herself in this poverty? Was Beijing 1995 worth the resources in money and labour that were put into it?

Miss Mutukwa is quick to respond to both

questions saying that what happened in Beijing was just a starting point to a very bright future that is on the horizon. She said the fight for gender parity like any other worthwhile process is one that needs time and energy from both men and women: "There is a great need to increase the participation of men in the fight against gender discrimination if it is to achieve the desired results."

She said that to address the situation, men need to be given more space and opportunity to give their own opinions and reflections on the gender imbalance in the societies they live in.

Equal Opportunities Commission Chairwoman, Julie Mellor said: "It is incredible that after 25 years of sex discrimination legislation so many people's lives are still shaped by outdated assumptions about the roles they should play in society just because of their sex".

Miss Mellor believes that not enough has been done to gather information from men as to why they continue to discriminate against women and asks them to give practical suggestions on how the problem can be resolved.

She was, however, quick to point out that with the help of the United Nations a number of NGOs over the years have done a good job in helping men to appreciate that women are not lesser human beings than they are.

She said the number of achievements that women have made since the Beijing Conference of 1995 should act as inspiration

for them to work even harder. She cited the adoption of the Protocol on Gender by some African countries as a landmark achievement for gender activists in the region.

She also said that the fact that all of the subregions on the continent have gender programs is testimony that the continent is ready to build upon its success, but admitted that this success so far is not enough to create sustainable and permanent change.

"As you read this article, the Beijing +10 conference is taking place," she said. Certainly, not all the women in Africa can have the opportunity to attend this conference, or will even hear or read about it. For such people, of what importance is this conference when they are still wallowing in unacceptable levels of poverty? For such people, Miss Mutukwa says a conference like this will only mean something when it puts food on the table; which is why the feminization of poverty is high on the Beijing + 10 agenda and deserves to be.

A life of dignity is every person's human right. This is true no matter where he or she lives or what his or her sex, race, or ethnic origin may be. And every woman, man, youth and child has basic needs that must be met if he or she is to live in dignity.

A life of poverty means that basic needs go unfulfilled, and fundamental human rights are violated. It is this encroachment on woman's rights that the Beijing + 10 seeks to address by making poverty reduction and eradication the key issue.

We are on track says women's leader

By Ruth Nesoba

"We have done some good work; the revolution started in Beijing 10 years ago and has not been completed. We are going at a slow pace but we can speed up our progress by looking for mechanisms which will enable us to speak with one voice for the liberation of our folk."

These were the strong words that came from Ms. Gertrude Mongella, the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the President of the Pan-African Parliament, during the official opening of the Ministerial Conference on the Decade Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

In an inspiring key note address, Ms. Mongella appreciated the strides that have been made in improving the status of the woman across the continent. "Indeed a lot of work has been done by women themselves, governments and civil society, signifying that the revolution began in Beijing ten years ago is on track. The steam might be slow but we are getting there," Ms. Mongella told the meeting.

Ms. Mongella says she is impressed that various women's groups and civil societies went the extra mile and pressured for developmental, structural and judicial reforms in their countries soon after the commitments

that were made by their governments during the Beijing and Dakar meetings.

Fortunately too, the gender issue has been taken into consideration on the African scene, she says, adding that with a greater representation of women in politics, women are now able to advocate for their cause. One of the key institutions which has been in the forefront in realizing this has been the African Union's Pan-African Parliament, which has gone one step further by establishing a women's caucus signaling a change that indeed men are becoming partners to women.

According to Ms. Mongella, in the last session of the Parliament, most of the resolutions brought in were by women calling for member States to ratify the Protocol on Women. The pace of ratification by member countries has so far been disappointing.

One of the other notable achievements by African women according to Ms. Mongella is that they networked to have the "Girl Child", a critical area of concern for Africa, given prominence, a move she describes as very important, "The girl of today is the woman of tomorrow. There are evident signs particularly on maternal health that some of the problems that women experience during their reproductive lives are part

of what they went through when they were young girls. If we can make life better during their childhood then we are safeguarding their future."

Yet, despite these achievements, it seems too soon for celebration, because as Ms. Mongella explains, there are many hurdles on the path before tangible success can be achieved. The biggest challenge remaining for the continent is the stark realization that we are not operating in the same setup we were in ten years ago.

Given that we are now living in a global village, Africa can no longer afford to ignore issues such as globalization, terrorism, technological advances such as the digital divide, computerization, etc, as so much has happened in the last decade that has influenced not only the life of African women but the entire continent at large.

The challenge is thus thrown to the Ministerial Conference that after this meeting they should take into consideration these global changes in order not to miss the economic boat.

Ms. Mongella proposes that it would be very necessary to adopt and embrace technology if the African woman is ever going to compete in the global economy that is



African women face an uncertain future

fully advanced technologically. She urged the conference to revisit the chapter on economic empowerment so as to put into place mechanisms that will help the African woman play her role in the global economy.

She told the meeting that if African women are to take on their share of leadership responsibilities for the continent then they must address other issues such as conflicts. She urged women to be in the forefront through the women's movements for peace, to avert instances such as the Darfur crisis.

Egypt's "PC for every home" initiative

By Ahmed El Gody

Increasing the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has become one of Egypt's national goals, in order to lay strong foundations for an 'independent' information society for today's generation.

The Government has introduced a "PC for every home" initiative using an innovative model for public-private partnership in making computers accessible to all Egyptians.

This initiative opened the door for Telecom Egypt and 37 private sector computer manufacturers to offer affordable, Internet-enabled family computers on an installment basis, with no collateral and no deposit required. The only guarantee needed is a fixed telephone line. Customers can sign up for a computer at any telephone exchange in their local areas at a total cost of between \$US300 and \$600, payable in

regular installments of \$15 equivalent per month, added to their telephone bills.

The fruits of the initiative have started to blossom, with nearly one million PCs already sold. Internet use has jumped from 1.5 million users in 2002 to over 3.3 million in 2004.

Increasing computer use is a critical step towards bridging the digital divide between Egypt and the developed world. Affordable access to computers is the foundation to a digital society and will provide a firm base for building a strong information technology sector. The Egyptian Government believes that the rapid distribution of affordable computers will also spread awareness of new technology, strengthen and expand domestic computer manufacturing, and open up export opportunities to the region.

Ministers review gender progress

By Elizabeth Lisuntha-Banda

ECA Executive Secretary, K.Y. Amoako, said on Tuesday with renewed conviction that governance and social justice have been undervalued and must come to the fore, affirming that more progress on gender issues is going to be made in Africa.

Opening the 7th African Regional Conference on Women Ministerial Conference on the Decade Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, Mr. Amoako said that though the momentum for gender movement has slowed on the global level, Africa continues to progress, particularly at the high political level.

"A commitment to 50 per cent representation in the AU Commission, the Presidency of the Pan African Parliament... nearly 40 per cent of Rwanda's Parliament and rising numbers in others... women have been lobbying pretty effectively for seats at political level," he said.

While applauding achievements made by African governments in seeing the

world through a gender lens, -- for example, by considering HIV/AIDS as a particular threat to women and girls -- Mr. Amoako said there was still a big gap between "where we are and where we want to be."

"Our women bear the brunt of poverty, of HIV/AIDS and poor health, of illiteracy, the lack of legal protections and the denial of high-level employment; we have a lot more work to do," he stated. In order to progress in the gender fight, the Executive Secretary said there is need to bolster empirical research on initiatives and pressure groups, devote more energy to women-specific projects, mainstream gender concerns into all aspects of development work, redress the persistent gender disparities more proactively, and change the lobbying strategies by focusing less on women's emancipation and dwelling more on gender equality targeted at both men and women.

"We need to envision a new Africa and we need to be able to sell that vision. If it is

Tempers flare *continued from page 2*

to do things; if they had issues to raise as Zimbabwe, we could deal with it," Espisip observed.

ECA's Senior Communications Adviser, Akwe Amosu, who chaired the session, also backed Brown, saying that she had the freedom to comment on countries that in her perception were failing in the area of good governance and the media. She pointed out that many people had expressed doubts about recent relations between the media and Government in Zimbabwe. Amosu was disappointed with the way the Zimbabwean delegate reacted to the situation: "He was unnecessarily aggressive in the way he took it up, especially since Audrey had said that she was willing to discuss the issue further with him."

This is the second time Zimbabwe has protested against being referred to at the

ongoing ADF IV. The delegation reacted sharply on Tuesday when two presenters from Kenya and Burundi questioned the effectiveness of the African Peer Review Mechanism when the African Union had failed to use it to push Zimbabwe for its alleged bad governance.

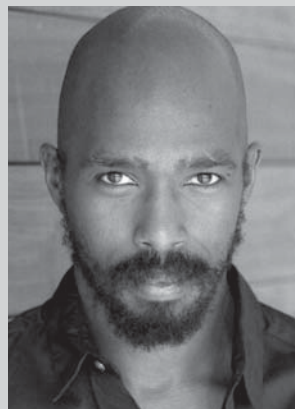
AfDB *continued from page 2*

well. It is the only triple-A rated financial institution on the African continent.

This is a testimony of its strengthened financial base, as reflected in its healthy earnings and the build-up of reserves in recent years, as well as the fact that all its financial ratios are today comparable to those of its sister multilateral development banks.

Beware of Time

Beware of Time, a documentary film advocating for the struggle against HIV/AIDS and for democracy in Africa will be shown at the UNECA. The film examines the attitudes of HIV Positive people as well as the crime and brutality of war on northern Ugandans. It is based on the true accounts of the experiences of HIV positive people, and has earned critical acclaim from the press in Kampala, London and New York.



The film will shown on Friday at 12.30 at the UNCC, Conference Room 1.

Today at 7.30 pm, *Biro*, a play by the same producer, will show at the Sheraton Hotel at the Lalibella Bar. *Biro* is a "Story of survival that journeys across the landscapes of Uganda, Cuba and America." It begins in a prison in Texas and goes on to show the plight of a man diagnosed HIV positive in 1986, at a time when "medication and sympathy were unavailable." Facing difficult choices, *Biro* is ready to do anything just to survive and move on.

The author and performer, Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine, wrote *Biro* "as a catalyst for reflection on HIV/AIDS prevention and the struggle for democracy in Africa." Ntare is a Ugandan-American actor, playwright and photographer. He has earned Master's Degree of Fine Arts in Acting from New York University. He has also completed studies as The Moscow Arts Theatre in Russia, The Royal National Theatre in London and The University of Virginia.

not obvious where our train is heading, it will be hard to attract passengers," he said. The Executive Secretary suggested three goals to be embraced by the meeting for immediate action, namely, achievement of gender parity in elementary education, empowerment of women at higher level by working with the African Union and dealing strongly with HIV/AIDS.

He said that education for girls is vital and that there is need for national campaigns in every country where progress is slow. On HIV/AIDS, he said a wide range of economic, social and political initiatives are needed to prevent the disease and to care for those families and communities

affected. With regard to dealing with the pandemic, Mr. Amoako stressed that the human and legal rights of girls and women need to be protected. "Most countries have laws against rape and for the protection of property rights. But, everywhere getting legal redress is cumbersome and lengthy... If we are fighting to get our girls into school only to have them raped by HIV-infected teachers who get off scot free, what is the point?"

"Fundamentally, we need gender-sensitive justice delivered to the girls and women on this continent.... We need to reform these systems, adding a lot of service innovations," he concluded.

Corruption *continued from page 1*

recent disappearance of ship full of crude oil off the coast of Nigeria. "How can a whole oil-tanker disappear?" he wondered.

Delegates further stressed the importance of building strong institutions that can tackle corruption, rather than having institutions in name only. Anti-corruption bodies should be fully-funded, fully staffed and fully free from interference by the executive. Some delegates gave examples of anti-corruption bodies which have to rely on a weak public prosecution and judicial system to take-up corruption cases.

Other sessions taking place on day three of ADF IV included a plenary session on 'Institutions for Effective Governance', chaired by Ms. Frene Noshir Ginwala, the former speaker of the South African parliament. The session debated ways of achieving an independent and effective judiciary in Africa, and examined the question of political parties in the context of legislative effectiveness. Delegates said although many African constitutions allow for separation of powers between the state and the judiciary, this separation is often more theoretical than real. There were calls for a clear separation of powers, and a meeting of African chief justices to harmonize legal systems. There were also

calls for better funding and capacity building for African political parties, especially opposition parties, to ensure that they can effectively hold the executive to account.

The other plenary session was titled "Public Voice and Accountability: The Growing Influence of Civil Society in Africa." The session was chaired by Salim Ahmed Salim, chairman of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation in Tanzania and former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of CIVICUS in South Africa, spoke at length on the important role of civil society in ensuring good governance in Africa. This was followed by a presentation by Adama Dieng, UN Assistant Secretary General and Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, who addressed the role of civil society in democratic processes. Nigerian Appeal Court judge, Justice Amina Augie, then spoke on human rights as a critical dimension of good governance in Africa.

Also taking place on Day Three were five parallel breakout sessions, on: Governance for private sector development and partnership; Public institutions and effective service delivery; Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and governance; and Media and governance.