

AFRICAN WOMEN'S CONCERN FOR PEACE

Background

African Women's concerns on the issue of peace are the outcome of a process that started with the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace (1993), the African Platform of Action on Women, Dakar (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995), and the Women's Leadership Forum on Peace Johannesburg (1996). It was in this context that the OAU and the ECA jointly established and launched in November 1998, the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) which is a major cornerstone of women's inclusion in peace processes and empowerment endeavours in the region since Beijing.

Since then, several other regional meetings and deliberations have taken place in search of a common platform on the issue of women and peace. The Pan-African Women's Conference on a Culture of Peace, co-organised by UNESCO, OAU and AWCPD in Zanzibar in May 1999 resulted in the unanimous adoption of the Zanzibar Declaration and Agenda for Peace. The Pan-African Women's Organisation Peace Forum held in Algiers concluded its deliberations by launching the Algiers Appeal. The Special Forum on Peace of the Sixth Regional Conference gathered great momentum and resulted in the official endorsement of the Declarations and Resolutions adopted by women's associations and NGOs meeting in the Peace Tent.

Thus, the Sixth Regional Conference on Women concluded deliberations on the issue of peace by reiterating its commitment to the Zanzibar Declaration and Agenda for Peace and by endorsing the Algiers Appeal and the Declarations of the Peace Tent during the Sixth Regional Conference on Women.

The following highlights the key concerns of African women that emerged from the various meetings and deliberations on the issue of peace, in the region:

1. Promoting the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building in Africa

- ◆ Lobbying for the increase of women's participation in the areas of reconciliation, negotiation and mediation of conflicts and undertaking capacity building of women's organisations in the field;
- ◆ Initiating peace missions led by women to war-torn societies ;
- ◆ Advocating for the inclusion of women refugees and displaced persons in peace negotiations and conflict resolution;

2. Integrating women in decision-making and changing the mainstream perspective of security issues to include a gender perspective

- ◆ Analysing the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mechanisms for defence and security from a gender perspective to assess the level of support given to women in their policy and institutional frameworks and their impact on the peace networks ;

- ◆ Advocating for an affirmative action policy that guarantees at least 30% representation of women in decision-making mechanisms at all levels ;
- ◆ Establishing an observatory for peace and democratic governance ;

3. Demilitarisation and disarmament of Africa

- ◆ Lobbying African governments to put in place mechanisms for the reduction and control of the arms trade that fuels conflicts and wars and jeopardises the development of Africa ;
- ◆ Supporting the subregional initiatives on demilitarisation, disarmament and drug control, such as the ECOWAS moratorium on the Importation, Export and Manufacture of Light Weapons and its Programme of Co-ordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED);
- ◆ Pressurising African governments to apply similar initiatives in other subregions, and to reduce military expenditures and re-channel these resources to people's basic development needs;

4. The prohibition of the use of children as soldiers

- ◆ Advocating for prohibition of the use of **children as soldiers** in conflicts;
- ◆ Helping release, demobilise, re-socialise, protect and actively integrate African children used as soldiers into constructive development processes Advocate for the prohibition of the use of **children as soldiers** in conflicts;
- ◆ Appealing vigorously to governments to implement national, regional and international laws and statutes that combat all forms of violence against women and children, notably the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and strengthening legal systems to ensure that perpetrators of such violence are brought to justice;
- ◆ Advocating for the adoption of the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women;

5. Pursuing strategies and initiatives that facilitate the changing of attitudes and gender stereotypes, particularly through the media

- ◆ Initiating the establishment of a Pan-African women's radio to present objective information, to build awareness, to mobilise widespread support in favour of peace and to launch special programs on women and a culture of peace;
- ◆ Documenting and disseminating women's success stories in peace- building, development and responsible leadership including through the awarding of prizes to

outstanding women and women's groups;

- ◆ Preparing a women's "Who's Who ?" and a history of African women leaders to serve as role models for future generations;

6. Establishing a culture of peace in Africa

- ◆ Developing a consensus of moral and cultural values that should be transmitted to younger generations;
- ◆ Integrating in civic education programs , values and principles of democracy and *responsible citizenship*;
- ◆ Working towards the inclusion of peace education in school curricula and in all learning institutions;

7. Increase of African women's capacities to further sustain peace in Africa.

- ◆ Strengthening of women's peace networks in general and the African Women Committee on Peace and Development in particular as the lead organisation ;
- ◆ Setting up Regional Sub-committees of the African women's movements for peace to meet regularly also on a regional level ;
- ◆ Establishing national committees of the African women's movements for peace where they do not exist;
- ◆ Ensuring the recruitment of qualified African women to high-level regional and international positions, including at the OAU ;

DECLARATION ON THE WEST AFRICAN INITIATIVE FOR A MORATORIUM ON LIGHT ARMS IN AFRICA

We, women's associations and NGOs, meeting in Addis Ababa during the NGO Consultative Meeting for the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women:

- **Considering** the Resolutions, Decisions and Declarations adopted by the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, the European Union, the International Organisation of the Francophonie, CEDEAO and NGOs working for peace;
- **Considering** the impact of the uncontrolled circulation of light arms of low calibre on civilian populations in general, and on women and children in particular;
- **Salute** the announcement of an initiative of the Republic of Mali for a West African moratorium on the manufacture, export and import of light arms ;
- **Exhort** Governments of other African countries to adopt similar moratoriums on light arms;
- **Give** our support for the convening of an international conference on all forms of illegal trade in arms;
- **Subscribe** without reserve to the initiative seeking the elaboration and adoption of a United Nations Convention to combat the manufacture, export and import of illegal arms, as part of the struggle against organised, transitional crime ;
- **Exhort** Heads of State and Government, Chairpersons, Secretary-Generals and Executive Secretaries of international, regional and subregional organisations to follow up on their efforts in the struggle against the proliferation of light arms and anti personnel mines by associating with women's associations and NGOs working for peace.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21 November 1999

DECLARATION ON CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

We, as women's associations and NGOs, meeting at the African Peace Tent during the NGO Consultative Meeting on 19 and 20 November 1999, before the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women:

- **Considering** the violent nature of internal and inter-state conflicts, which affect certain African countries, and their impact on civilian populations in general and on women and children in particular ;
- **Taking** into account the Geneva Conventions, the efforts of the United Nations and of international, regional and subregional organisations, and the initiatives of NGOs in the prevention and resolution of conflict and the maintenance of peace ;
- **Express** our deep preoccupation with the multiplication and intensification of conflict as well as with the security of civilian populations ;
- **Express** our solidarity with the civilian populations who are victims of conflict, and particularly with women and children ;
- **Demand** of the parties to conflict the immediate cessation of hostilities and the effective protection of civilian populations ;
- **Urgently** call for the implementation of strategies based on reconciliation, the support of relations of peaceful co-existence, the respect of international conventions and the elaboration of new norms allowing for the security of civilian populations, the promotion of democratic culture and peace education that takes into account our positive social values ;
- **Exhort** the parties to conflict and the international community to include women in processes of negotiation, conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace at all levels ;
- **Congratulate** the restoration of peace in Algeria with the implementation of a civil accord, in which women's associations and NGOs have been among the principal movers ;
- **Launch** an appeal to all parties to conflict that they invest in a process of peace and reconciliation, which is indispensable for sustainable development, assure the protection and defence of displaced civilian populations , and allow them to return to their place of origin ;
- **Demand** the constitution of a delegation of women's personalities who are competent and active in the area of peace and who represent women's associations and regional and sub-regional NGOs, to undertake a peace and solidarity mission to the Chair of the OAU.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21 November, 1999

DECLARATION ON CHILD SOLDIERS IN AFRICA

We, women's associations and NGOs, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the NGO Consultative Meeting for the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, refer to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Resolutions, Decisions and Declarations of the Organisation of African Unity and the International Organisation of the Francophonie concerning the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflicts:

- **Call** for respect of the international conventions relating to children's rights ;
- **Demand** that Governments ratify the African Charter for the Rights and Well Being of the Child ;
- **Reaffirm** our support for all national, regional and international initiatives seeking to end the recruitment and the involvement of children in armed conflicts ;
- **Demand** more involvement of women's associations and NGOs working for peace in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in reconstruction and the maintenance of peace of post-conflict situations, particularly concerning the phenomena of children enrolled in combatant armies ;
- **Urge** Governments and international organisations to support women's initiatives in the struggle against this phenomena, which is tied to poverty and the exclusion of women

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 21, 1999