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5-8 November, 2001  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

***OAU ACTIVITIES IN FOLLOW-UP TO  
THE BEIJING PLUS 5 CONFERENCE***



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**PAPER PRESENTED AT THE MEETING  
OF THE  
UNECA COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT**

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BRIEF PRESENTATION ON THE MAJOR GENDER CONCERNS AND RELATED ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE OAU IN FOLLOW-UP TO THE BEIJING +5 CONFERENCE

It should be realized that the Women, Gender and Development Division, while being seized with gender issues both at the level of the OAU Secretariat and Member States, has been refocusing and redirecting its efforts to be in tune with the transformation of the OAU to the African Union.

Preparatory to the Beijing +5 itself the OAU, through its office in New York and the Women, Gender and Development Division, coordinated the activities of its Member States in New York through regular meetings of the African Group at the various Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. In fact, at the final preparatory phase to the Beijing +5 meeting, the OAU worked very closely with the ECA/ACW to ensure that the outcome of the 6<sup>th</sup> African Regional Conference on Women, being Africa's common position, was incorporated into the Outcome document at the global level.

Since Beijing +5, however, the OAU has, within its mandate, carried out a number of activities in its continuous efforts to ensure that women's concerns are continuously taken on board in OAU policies and programmes both at the level of the OAU Secretariat and its Member States. Some of these activities are listed hereunder.

1. Promoting the Fundamental Human Rights of Women

The OAU has been working very closely with the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights regarding the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women. The Division participated at the consultation organised by Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS) on the Draft Protocol and the Gender dimension of the World Conference on Racism. The Division chaired the Working Group Session on the Draft Protocol that developed strategies to accelerate the process of its elaboration, adoption, ratification and implementation.

2. HIV/AIDS

The Division participated at the ECA-organised ADF 2000 whose theme was HIV/AIDS and leadership. The Division ensured that the gender dimension was mainstreamed into the documents emanating from the OAU Summit on HIV/AIDS held in April 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria. The First Ladies' Summit in

Rwanda in May and the IPPFAR meeting in July 2001 were also seized with HIV/AIDS among women and young people.

### 3. Women in the Peace Process

The Division has also been seized with the role of women in the peace process. The Division, being central to the establishment of the AWCPD is working closely with the ACW and the OAU Conflict Management Centre to ensure that the Committee is capacitated to enable it fulfil the purpose for which it was established.

The Division participated at the meeting of the Third International Conference of the Africa Women's Leadership Forum Within the Context of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) in Tunisia on 22-24 January 2001, and at the inaugural meeting launching Mano River Women Peace Initiative in June 2001.

The Division also continuously advocates for the inclusion of women in all OAU peace-building initiatives.

### 4. Gender Policy Development

The Division is in the process of elaborating an African Union Gender Policy and Institutional Framework for its implementation. This is expected to guide the activities of the Continent in this regard as well as developing appropriate operational modalities for the effective mainstreaming of women's concerns and gender issues into the policies and activities of the General Secretariat itself as well as within the individual Member States.

The Division, in collaboration with HelpAge International, convened an Experts' meeting in November 2001 in Kampala, Uganda. The meeting developed an OAU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing. As a follow-up, the Division is organising a Conference to Further Consider the Policy Framework and Plan of Action in December 2001. Participants will be drawn from all OAU Member States, and relevant OAU social partners.

The Division continues to collaborate and participate both locally and internationally with its partners to develop their gender-related policies. In this regard, the Division participated at the Regional Consultations on ADB's Gender Policy, which took place in Addis Ababa in November 2000. The Consultations brought together experts from all over Africa, representing a spectrum of cross-sectoral interests, sub-regions, and governmental and non-

governmental organisations. The objective of the Consultations was to develop a Gender Policy to enhance the Bank's operations, taking into account international best practices in gender mainstreaming.

Locally, in Ethiopia, the Division participated at: the Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Effects of Drought in July 2001; the National Workshop on Gender Equity in Ethiopia; and a Workshop, on the Status of Women in Leadership and Decision-making in Ethiopia. The Division participated at the General Assembly Meeting of the African Union for the Blind held in October 2000 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and at the Women's Forum which preceded it.

#### 5. Education

The Women, Gender and Development Division participated in the Gender and Education Task Force established within the OAU/UN cooperation framework. Pursuant to these consultations, and in order to facilitate implementation of the Kampala Declaration on the Empowerment of Women through Functional Literacy and the Education of the Girl Child which has been incorporated into the Harare Programme of Action of the Decade of Education in Africa, the Division participated at the Eastern Africa Regional Seminar on the Decade of Education which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2000. The Seminar was organised within the framework of Decision AHG/Dec. 136 (XXXV) adopted by the 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Algiers, Algeria, in July 1999. The Decision urges Regional Economic Communities to take the necessary steps to implement the Programme of Action in consultation with the OAU General Secretariat and appeals to relevant African and International Agencies to support the implementation of the Programme.

One of the major outcomes for the Seminar was the adoption by the Eastern Africa Region of a joint regional project, under the leadership of the Government of Djibouti and the Kenya Chapter of FAWE, to promote the empowerment of women through functional literacy and the education of the girl-child.

#### 6. Human Trafficking

The Secretariat through its Women's Division presented a paper on "Problems of Trafficking in Human Beings: An African Perspective", to the First Pan-African Conference on Human Trafficking which was convened in

Abuja, Nigeria, from 18 to 23 February, 2001. This Conference was organised in response to the recognition that the issue of trafficking in human beings has again reared its ugly head on the African Continent, but this time with a feminine face because, while poverty which currently holds Africa firmly in its grip affects all people, women are the poorest of the poor. This feminisation of poverty has resulted in the feminisation of the resultant migration as well as the feminisation of human trafficking as women leave their homes and countries in search of better futures elsewhere, only to end up being exploited and working in deplorable conditions without any form of protection or even the possibility of recourse to law.

#### 7. The African Union

The Secretariat participated in the Pan-African Women's Conference on African Women in a Unified Africa, which took place in Tripoli, Libya, from 21 to 24 April. The Conference was organised by the African Women Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD), and hosted by the Libyan Government. The Conference was opened by H.E. Muammar Qaddafi, the Leader of the Great al Fatah Revolution, and was chaired by H.E. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, the Vice-President of Uganda and Chairperson of the AWCPD. The Conference brought together a wide-cross section of women and men from the five regions of the OAU. Included among the participants were opinion leaders and policy makers such as Ministers, Members of Parliament, representatives of people with disabilities, journalists and other media representatives, NGOs, and youths.

The Conference had four objectives: to identify the role of women in the establishment of the African Union through exchange of information, expertise and knowledge; to promote women's participation in the legislative and executive bodies of the African Union with special focus on the decision-making machineries and structures to be established in this connection; to promote the role of youths in supporting the creation of the African Union; and to identify constraints to women's effective participation in development processes.

The Division presented a paper on "The Role of Women in the Integration and Union of Africa" at the Roundtable Discussion on Empowering Women – Building National Capacity to Combat HIV/AIDS which was held in Accra, Ghana, on 16 June 2001, to commemorate the Day of the African Child. The Roundtable Discussion was organised by the All Africa Students Union (AASU), in conjunction with the National Union of Ghana Students. The

Division will follow up on the outcome of the discussions, and work with AASU to make the youth partners in addressing the challenges facing Africa.

In recognition of the role, contribution and achievement of the women of Africa in the development of the Continent, the OAU, led by the Women's Division has been celebrating the Pan-African Women's Day. The celebration for the year 2001 was held on 25 September at the OAU premises. A round-table discussion was organised on the theme of "Women Within the African Union: Partners for Durable Peace and Sustainable Development." The theme was timely and relevant as the OAU is in the process of transforming itself into the African Union.

Papers were presented by: the OAU Women's Division on Challenges of Gender Issues in Africa Today; the ECA African Women Centre on "Engendering the African Union"; and the AWCPD on "The African Women Committee for Peace and Development (AWCPD) and the African Union. Partners for Durable Peace and Sustainable Development."

Participants were drawn from OAU and non-OAU Embassies based in Addis Ababa, members of the UN system as well as OAU's partners and members of the press.