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*Regional Forum of Women Leaders
in preparation for the Fourth
World Conference on Women*

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

24 - 28 July 1995

**AN ISSUE PAPER ON THE MAJOR AREAS OF
CONCERN TO WOMEN IN AFRICA AND STRATEGIES
FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AT
THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
BEIJING, CHINA**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Global Platform for Action, the main policy document to be adopted at the Beijing Conference focuses on some of the critical issues identified as posing fundamental obstacles to the advancement of women. The Platform aims to accelerate the removal of these obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of public and private life, including economic and political decision-making. It is an action-oriented Agenda for Equality, Development and Peace, which seeks to safeguard women's human rights throughout their life cycle. It stresses the principle of partnership between women and men as the basis for achieving equality, development and peace.

2. In the same context, but more regionally specific, the African Platform for Action: African Common Position for the Advancement of Women, as outlined in its mission statement is a framework for action and a potent tool for the (re)formulation and (re)articulation of policies and strategies aimed at concrete and sustainable programmes for the advancement of women.

3. The document therefore is a major input in fostering the cause of women and development in Africa beyond Nairobi (1985) , Abuja (1989) and Beijing (1995). It comprises a major and concerted regional, sub-regional and national review of the implementation of the Nairobi Strategies; an evaluation of the short-falls and achievements; proposals for action and strategies for a common and better future, and a starting point of a process of social, economic and

political renewal for the building of a sustainable development model, which will give pride of place to women's quality of life, as well as redefined relationships between women and men. It articulates actionable programmes and strategies underlying medium- and long-term objectives, and spells out concrete ways and means for their implementation. It recommends, among others, the need for strengthening institutional mechanisms at all levels-national, regional and international. It also recommends adequate mobilization of resources for the financing of women's programmes for economic empowerment, poverty alleviation and wealth creation.

4. Given the action-oriented character of both the African and Global Platforms for Action, it is important to ensure that key issues of concern to women in Africa, including those already identified in the African Platform for Action, are adequately addressed and incorporated into the Global Platform for Action. This issue paper highlights this by clustering the key areas of concern to women in Africa in the Global Platform for Action for discussion and consensus building. As the critical area of concern regarding the girl child is a contribution from the African region into the Global Platform for Action, the meeting will give special attention to the issue with a view to build a common position on related bracketed text. This paper also outlines a strategy for visibility and effective participation of African delegations at Beijing.

II. THE GLOBAL DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION IN RELATION TO THE AFRICAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION

5. The Global Platform for Action (GPA) to be adopted at the Fourth World Conference on

Women in China in September 1995, has identified twelve critical areas of concern for the advancement of women, under the overall thematic umbrella of Action for Equality, Development and Peace. Except for the different terminology used, these areas almost coincide with those eleven identified in the African Platform for Action (APA): African Common Position for the Advancement of Women. Indeed the twelfth critical area of concern in the Global Platform - i.e. The girl-child, is the contribution of the African Platform for Action, which was added at the last Preparatory Committee Meeting for the conference held in New York, in March 1995.

6. There are only four critical areas of concern where a marked shift in emphasis appears between the Global and the African Platforms: 2 in the GPA, and 2 in the APA. In the GPA the sixth critical area of concern addresses the:

" Inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the production process itself. "

Since this critical area of concern cuts across some of those in the African Platform for Action (eg. Women's poverty, insufficient food security and lack of economic empowerment; Inadequate access of women to education, training , science and technology; and Women's legal and human rights), the African delegation would need to give their support to this area as its implementation will include activities called for in the APA in the areas listed above. The additional input that could be made would be to give more emphasis to the need for support to rural women.

7. The eighth area of concern in the GPA addresses the issue of:

" Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women. "

Under it may be noted that the APA addresses this critical area of concern, in Chapter IV section "e"

- Institutional Arrangements for the Implementation of the APA.

African delegations should therefore support this area as it calls for more detailed action for the benefit of women.

8. In the APA, two main areas of specific concern to the African region are not as emphasized in the GPA. They are:

" Women's vital role in culture, the family and socialization"

and

" Mainstreaming of gender disaggregated data."

9. As already indicated all the other critical areas of concern in the two documents more or less coincide. Such convergence should therefore make it possible for the African delegations to concentrate on seeking, soliciting and advocating for support and assistance in implementing the APA.

The African Position on Bracketed Elements in the GPA

10. Bracketed elements in the GPA reflect areas where there was no consensus amongst delegations attending the last PrepCom in New York in March 1995. Following the PrepCom

meeting the Conference Secretariat identified twelve clusters of the bracketed text within the GPA. These are:

- 1) Resources
- 2) Institutional framework
- 3) The macro-economic framework for action
- 4) The micro-economic framework for action
- 5) The political framework
- 6) The International Conference on Population and Development
- 7) Human rights, including the World Conference on Human Rights and its follow-up.
- 8) Diversity, including questions of groups of special concern.
- 9) Civil society
- 10) Accountability, responsibility and commitment
- 11) Structure and style in the platform
- 12) Other matters not classifiable into main clusters.

11. On the basis of the large number of the 12 clusters, the following more focused groupings could be made.

- a) Population and Development
- b) Human rights
- c) (i) Institutional Framework
(ii) The macro-economic framework for action:

- d) (i) Resources
- (ii) The Political Framework
- e) (i) The micro-economic framework for action
- (ii) Diversity and groups of special concern
- f) (i) civil society
- (ii) Accountability, responsibility and commitment
- (iii) Structure and style in the platform

12. With respect to the 11 critical areas of concern identified in the African Platform for Action an alternative grouping of the yet to be agreed upon areas in the Global Platform for Action could be made as follows:¹

(a) Population and development

- (i) roles of women and men in family and society * [30, 41, 85b, 108h, 148e, 180g, 187, 192i, 194e]
- (ii) family and family structures [38, 50, 61a, 187, L.9]
- (iii) religious and cultural expression and values [9, 31,35,43, 46, 73, 74, 82f, 82h, 85o, 85q, 109b, 171a, 232g, 242d, 258b iv, 276d, 291]
- (iv) sexual and reproductive health [85k, 98, 105, 107u, 108m, C.3, 110e, 110h, 111a, 112b, 281c, 281e]

¹ * The numbers refer to the clusters of bracketed elements in the Global Platform for Action.

- (v) sexual and reproductive rights [94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 107k, 108d, 109m, 123, 232f]
- (vi) counselling and access to services [85t, 95, 98, 104, 107c, 107h, 107h first alternative text, 107h Second alternative text, 108g, 109m, 126f, 209i, 281g, 283d]
- (vii) sexual education, information and sexual behaviour etc. [76, 85l, 95, 99, 100, 108a, 108e, 109l, 109n, 109p, 110i, 267, 269]

(b) Human Rights

- (i) terminology relating to Universal human rights of Women, Universally recognized human rights, basic rights etc. [2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 33, 41, 43, 46, 71, 113, 125e, 132, 137, 147h, 147i, 149o, I, 213, 222, 223, I.L., 274f, 300, 326]
- (ii) violation of human rights of women including rape, Trafficking and others [44, 115, 123, 131b, 131c, 131d, 136, 144d, 147e, 147f, 147h, 149h, 180b, 209j, 225, 225 first alternative text, 225 second alternative text, 232g, 269, 277c, 277d]
- (iii) violence against women [125s, 128, 231, 231h, 231h alternative text]
- (iv) international instruments [122, 125f, 130a, 133, 214, 230c, 230d, 230h, 230k, 230l, 230n, 230o, 233d, 233g, 245c, 259, 278b, 281i]
- (v) economic rights and the right to development, etc. [63b, 167e, 232j, 256g, 274d, L.]

(c) Resources

- (i) new and additional resources [5, 61a, 68, 87a, 88b, 125n, 126g, 126i, 149l(8.1), 171a, 175d, 245d, 325, 346, 360, 361, 361 first alternative text, 361 Second alternative text, 362]
- (ii) "adequate" versus "necessary" resources [5, 59, 108c, 111a, 111b, 111c, 112a, 310]
- (iii) the role of international financial institutions and other actors [171c, 206(2.2, 2.3), 212, 343(2.4), 344(2.4), 345(2.4), 353]
- (iv) resource priorities [80(3.1) 89d, 111a, 145b, 149n]

(d) Institutional Framework

- (i) monitoring and coordinating mechanisms [111e, 112c, 148b, 194b, 211e, 258b, 258b iv, 258d, 299, 308, 312, 343(1.3), 344(1.3), 345(1.3)]
- (ii) national machinery [198, 203a, 203b, 205b, 205e, 207e, 208c, 208d, 208e, 230f]
- (iii) Commission on the Status of Women [258d, 300, 318, 319, 320, 321]
- (iv) Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women [230k]

(e) The macro-economic framework for action

- (i) structural adjustment programmes [18, 49(3.2), 80(1.4), 93, 177b, 220]

- (ii) debt and debt burden [15(5.5), 49(3.1), 61c]
- (iii) transnational corporations [164, 167m, 179, 237]
- (iv) sustainable development and Agenda 21 [16, 19, 37, 60c, 60d, 246, 247, 248, 253e, 253f, 256d, 257c]
- (v) economic policies [49, 60a, 60b, 60c, 60d, 60h, 93, 153, 162, 167q, 207b, 207b alternative text]
- (vi) Other macro-economic issues [159, 164]

(f) Political framework

- (i) armed conflict [132, 134, 225]
- (ii) armament and disarmament [145c, 145e, 145d, 145f]
- (iii) military spending [15(3.2), 139, E.2]
- (iv) political issues [17, 44, 49, 132, 135, 140, 141, 144c, 145a, 145d, 147b, 147c, 147j, 147k, E.6, 151, 183, 258b ii, 305]

(g) Accountability, Responsibility and Commitment

- (i) NGOs [62, 107, 111, 175, 233]
- (ii) affirmative action [82a, B.2, 84k, 85b, 89a, B.5 bis, 108p, 144a, 144b, 144c, 180m, 189, 192a, 192b, 192h, 193c, 194a, 196c, 283a, 283d]
- (iii) degree of commitment [87, 88, 149i, 167g, 174, 175a, 178, 179, 180j, 180a, 192h, 207a, 209a, 209e, 209f, 232d, 233g, 239a, 239c, 242b, 253a, 274b, 277, 299, 360]

(h) The micro-economic framework for action

- (i) social-security coverage and labour law [107d, 177g, 180f, 181a, 181b, 182b, 182c]
- (ii) work-environment flexibility [163, 181c, 181c alternative text]
- (iii) national accounts and unpaid work, etc. [158, 180n, 207b alternative text, 209f, 209g, 212]

(i) Civil society

- (i) the media and its role (126j, 130d, 239h, 241d, 244a, 244b)
- (ii) role of NGO's (27, 228, 295, 298, 351)
- (iii) private sector (179)

III. A STRATEGY FOR AFRICA'S EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AT THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

13. It should be recalled that the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (NFLS), which were adopted by the Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi in July 1985, were largely inspired by the African common position adopted in 1984 during the joint ECA/OAU Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development held in Arusha, Tanzania. This achievement was the result of the strong coordination between African delegations who proved to be particularly unanimous and dynamic during the Conference.

14. The Fourth World Conference on Women will have as its main objectives the assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of the NFLS as well as outlining a new action-oriented approach which takes into account current global and regional realities, and the great challenges of the end of this century and the beginning of the new millennium. To meet these challenges and to maximize the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, a coherent and clear strategy for the active and effective participation of Africa is imperative and indispensable. This strategy should be articulated around four major areas, namely: **active participation in the conference, coordination of the African group, harmonization with NGO activities and productive dialogue with development partners.**

1. Active participation at the conference

15. The discussions at the Conference will be organized in plenary sessions and in working groups formed on the basis of various themes and chapters of the Platform for Action, as well as the critical areas of concern identified therein. There will also be several informal consultation groups. An effective African presence should be felt in all the debates both in the plenary and working groups. To do so, African delegations should, as much as possible, take a very active part in the debates, in terms of their official statements which should concentrate more on the critical areas of concern to Africa and the way they could be tackled at all levels. Their various interventions and their individual and collective contacts with delegations from other regions are also of utmost importance. All these contacts should be guided by the African common position adopted in Dakar in November 1994, while focusing on the areas of concern

yet to be agreed upon, as regrouped in the paragraphs above.

16. Finally, it should be noted that Africa will have nine positions in the Bureau of the Fourth World Conference. The countries which wish to be in the Bureau should send their application in writing to the Conference Secretariat through their Permanent Missions in New York. The delegations should be prepared to assume a number of responsibilities, particularly chairing of meetings or working and negotiation groups, and actively participating in the drafting committees/groups, both official and informal. They also have the responsibility of informing the African group on all issues emanating from their various Committee/Bureau meetings. It is therefore important that they adequately master the detailed contents of the Platform which is the basic Conference Document.

17. In their daily briefing meetings, reporting by country delegations covering the various meetings and then taking back the views of their delegations, is an important aspect of the participation of delegates.

2. Coordination of African delegations

18. It is expected that all African countries will be represented at Beijing. Several African NGOs will also take part. The African representation will naturally be highly significant among the 15,000 participants to the Conference and the 36,000 to the NGO Forum. Effective coordination is therefore indispensable for avoiding duplication and waste of resources and for

focusing attention on the common position adopted in Dakar. In this regard regular meetings of African delegations will be necessary in order to mobilise all concerned and to adopt a common African position on each important issue that will be dealt with at the Conference. These meetings should be open to accredited African NGO representatives who wish to attend. In this connection, members of delegations at the national level must be fully informed about the objectives of the conference, the agenda and major issues particularly the critical areas of concern as outlined in the Global and African Platform for Action.

19. For increased effectiveness and co-efficiency, it is suggested that the African Group meetings should be chaired by the chairperson of the Dakar Conference (Senegal) who should also be the spokesperson of the group during the Conference. As usual, the Chairperson of the African group will benefit from the technical and logistical support of the ECA and OAU delegations. ECA and OAU will serve as the Secretariat of the African Group meetings and will regularly provide information and documentation useful to the agenda of the African delegations, including the preparation of short statements that are timely and strategic for drafting sessions. A calendar of meetings and programmed consultations will be prepared periodically and distributed to the group.

20. In her capacity as spokesperson, the chairperson of the African Group will establish and maintain permanent contact with the media. With the support of the ECA delegation, she will ensure that the media representatives frequently cover activities of the African Group. Press interviews and communiques will be issued as necessary. It is however understood that each

delegation may wish to make its own statements independently to the press but its views should, as much as possible, be consistent with the collective approach of the group. The African media present in Beijing should be especially sensitized to its responsibility of defending African interests and of promoting a positive image of the continent. It is also important that the African Group forges and utilizes alliances with such groups as the Group of 77 in defence of its own interests and for consensus building.

3. **Harmonization of activities with NGOs**

21. A significant number of participants (36,000) at the NGO Forum has been accredited to the Conference. Experience has shown that NGO activities at major international conferences are of the greatest importance. In fact, some NGOs are specialized in specific fields and are particularly assertive in advocating for and publicizing their messages and lobbying for the adoption of specific measures in their fields of competence. Since only a few NGOs may be allowed to make direct interventions at the conference, African NGOs should consider making their inputs through government delegations.

22. The African continent has its NGO network, the majority of which participated at the 1994 Dakar Conference and consequently are party to the African Platform for Action: African Common Position for the Advancement of Women. Consequently, it would be useful for the African delegations to draw upon the commitment of these NGOs by supporting their activities and by sensitizing them on the need to support the major African positions. Specifically,

African delegations should be actively involved in the African Tent which will be mounted for ten days during the Beijing Conference. The Tent will host twelve thematic areas in the form of exhibitions, expositions, films, documentation and presentation. Regional NGO networks will coordinate the different thematic activities and facilitate the communication efforts. Among the themes to be covered are Poverty and Economic Empowerment, Peace and Women in Conflict, the Girl Child, Environment, Agriculture and Food Security, Education, Health, Women and the Media, Gender based Planning and Training, Art, Cultural and Sports, and Women and Political Empowerment. There will be a series of special activities organized by UN Agencies and members of the UN system (See annex). It is advised that participants explore activities of their choice and interest.

23. African delegations must maintain great cohesiveness on the ideas contained in the African Platform for Action. Such cooperation implies regular exchange of information as well as the participation of NGOs in the meetings and consultations of government delegations and vice versa. No doubt, for all these activities, the ECA and OAU Secretariat will have a central and coordinating role to play because, as the focal point for the delegations, it will liaise with the Secretariat of the World Conference as well as with other counterparts. The ECA and OAU Secretariat will be attentive to the concerns of African delegations and channel these concerns for necessary action. It will stimulate and arrange for the exchange of views and ensure that common positions are understood and maintained.

4. **Productive dialogue with development partners**

24. It is expected that the Beijing Conference will gather most of the principal actors in Gender and Development. The African delegations should therefore take the opportunity to initiate dialogue with interested partners. To this end, a meeting will be organized by ECA and OAU with a view to calling the attention of development partners to gender perspectives and priorities of the African region as contained in the African Platform for Action.

25. Particular attention will be drawn to key issues such as eradication of poverty; institutional and capacity building in the areas of education, health, and environment; debt conversion in favour of gender programmes, women in conflict situation and violence against women.

26. The anticipated outcome of such a dialogue would be a firm commitment from partners to support specific sectors of interest; this, coupled with a strong political will and women's determination are the only guarantee for accelerating the advancement of African women, thus ensuring their equal partnership in the development of their respective countries.

IV CONCLUSION

27. The foregoing mapped out activities and strategies, when constructively implemented will strengthen not only Africa's common position for effective intervention at the conference towards a global consensus building but also in respect of Africa's improved and enhanced relationship with her development partners.

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

Meeting Hours: a.m. 10:00 - 1:00; lunch: 1:15 - 2:45; p.m. 3:00 - 6:00; evening: 6:15 open

3 September 1995 (one room for 400 persons)				
10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (lunch) 3-6 p.m. open to press	UNESCO	High level consultation on women's contribution to a culture of peace (women heads of State and of Government, heads of agencies and Nobel prize winners)		

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

5 September 1995		11		
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	WHO/ UNFPA	Colloquium on women and health security	ILO/ ITC/ UNU WIDER/ WORLD BANK	Panel on changing role of women in the economy and the impact of globalization
lunch	WHO/ UNESCO	Panel on women, health and education	UNIFEM	Panel on commitment to the world's women
p.m.	WHO/ILO WHO/CHR	Panel on women, health and work Panel on women, health and violence	WFP/ UNHCR/ UNFPA	Panel on women in conflict situations
evening	WHO	Panel on women, health and AIDS	HABITAT	Panel discussion on women and men on the road to Istanbul - Habitat II

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

6 September 1995			
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)
a. m.	UNICEF	<i>Girl child: thematic workshops</i>	UNIDO Panel discussion on industrial global change, women and socio economic progress
lunch	UNICEF		UNDP/ UNEP High level panel on gender, environment and sustainable human development
p. m.	UNICEF	<i>Panel on agents of change in the 21st century</i>	UNFPA Implementing the ICFD: the women's perspectives
evening	UNICEF		UNIFEM Panel on banking on the poor: women's economic empowerment

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

UNEP "PLANT A TREE" CEREMONY

7 September 1995	31			
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	FAO/IFAD/ WFP/ WORLD BANK	Feeding 5 billion people by 2010: women's share	UNIFEM/ UNESCO/ CONGO	Women and global governance: politics and identity
lunch	FAO	Women, population and development: a success story of integrating population's needs with women's empowerment and poverty reduction in China	ECA/OAU/ UNDP	Panel on women in leadership positions
p.m.	FAO/ILO/ UNIDO/ITC/ UNV/DDSMS	Empowering rural women for the 21st century: strategies for employment and organization	UNDCP/ NGO Committees	Panel on women and substance abuse, women and addiction
evening	FAO/INTER- AGENCY/NGOs	Sounds and shows by rural women	WORLD BANK 6:15-7:45	Economics of gender equality

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

8 September 1995			
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)
a.m.	UNESCO/ UNDP/ WORLD BANK/ UNICEF/ UNFPA	Opening ceremony with the Jomtien partners Presentation of Global Framework of Action on education for Girls and Women Panel discussion	UNCHR/ UNESCO/ UNIFEM/ UNICEF/ UNHCR/ ILO/ UNICRI
lunch	UNESCO		UNHCR/ UNFPA/ WHO
p.m.	UNESCO	Three roundtables chaired by different agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, WORLD BANK, UNFPA and UNESCO)	CEDAW/ UNESCO
evening	UNESCO	Literacy Day Prize award ceremony and cultural event	UNCHR/ UNICRI/ UNIFEM/ UNHCR

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

9 September 1995				
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	UNICEF/ UNIFEM/ IPU	Panel discussion on the complementarity of women's rights and children's rights and the two Conventions: CRC and CEDAW		
lunch	UNDP/ RBLAC	Legal standards in the context of gender (Book launch)		
p.m.	UNDP/ UNRISD/ UNV	Gender mainstreaming: obstacles and opportunities	UNIDO/ GAWH	Panel on implementing women's health and its relation to industrial development
evening				

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

11 September 1995 (one room for 400 persons)	11			
a.m.	DAW (UNICEF/ UNESCO/ UNIFEM/ UNFPA)	Activities on youth		
lunch				
p.m.	UNIFEM/ UNFPA/DAW DAW (UNICEF/ UNESCO/ UNIFEM/ UNFPA)	Roundtable on reproductive health of African youth (with video) Activities on youth		
evening				

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
 Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

12 September 1995				
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	INSTRAW/ DDSMS	Panel on women and natural resources management water, sanitation, waste management, environment and renewable sources of energy	UNFPA	Panel discussion on women's empowerment and reproductive health
lunch	WORLD BANK	Collaboration with borrowers	DAW/ WOMEN WORLD BANKING	The missing links: financial services for the majority
p.m.	INSTRAW/ DDSMS	Panel on women and economic and political empowerment - governance, human resources management and credit	UNIFEM	Roundtable on women's economic empowerment, globalization and economic restructuring
evening			IUC/ILO	Video documentary on export promotion: villages in Ghana and transitional economies

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

13 September 1995				
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	UNIFEM	Building bridges: women speak out on peace	CEDAW/ UNIFEM	Workshop: dialogue on CEDAW
lunch	REGIONAL COMMISSIONS	A decade of change and challenge, 1985 - 1995	DAW	Women and credit
p.m.	JCGP/ UNSTAT	Workshop panel on gender statistics	NGLS	Workshop on women and development: women on the UN agenda
evening			WHO	Panel on women's health in the western Pacific region

Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September, 1995
Schedule of Special Events

21 June 1995

14 September 1995				
Room L (250 persons)			Room M (150 persons)	
a.m.	UNU/ WIDER	Gender and development: a UNU perspective		
lunch				
p.m.	UNESCO	Women and the media		
evening				