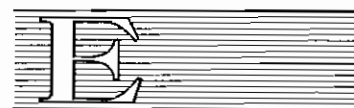




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African Centre for Gender and Development

Seventh African Regional Conference on Women
*Decade Review of the implementation of the
Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action (Beijing+10)*

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Reflection on the State of The African Women Committee on Peace and Development

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I. Introduction

This report of the ECA which reflects on the state of the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD) provides a consolidated summary of the outcomes of the three different evaluations, i.e, the evaluation of the OAU/ECA task force on the renewal of the Committee's membership under a clear institutional framework; the internal review of the AWCPD carried out by its members; and the independent evaluation of the performance of the AWCPD; and puts forward the situation that faced AWCPD for consideration. Section II, gives the historical context on the establishment of the Committee, its mandate, objectives and structure. Section III, presents the outcomes of the three evaluations, focusing on the performance of the Committee and the constraints faced by the Committee in the course of discharging its functions. Section IV, summarizes the recommendations and conclusions of the three evaluations, and Section V, expresses ECA's points of view on the state of AWCPD within the framework of the decade review of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

II. The African Women Committee on Peace and Development

2.1 Context

The need for the setting up of a committee of African women, whose functions would mainly focus on mainstreaming the voices of women at the highest levels of conflict prevention, resolution and management, was concretized during the first Conference on Women and Peace that took place in Kampala, Uganda, in November 1993. African women who attended the conference in their individual capacities and/or representing their organizations, requested the OAU and ECA to support the implementation of the Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace, and in particular to help them in facilitating the creation of the committee which they believed was the only and best mechanism for promoting women's involvement in peace initiatives.

Consequently, the OAU and ECA in collaboration with UNDP, UNHCR, UNIFEM and ABANTU for Development organized an Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting/Women in Leadership Forum on Peace in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1996, which devised concrete steps and modalities for the establishment of the African Women's Committee on Peace and Development (AWCPD).

The AWCPD was then established in April 1998 and launched in November 1998 by the Secretary General of the OAU and the Executive Secretary of the UNECA pursuant to the implementation of

Resolution CM/Dec.337 (LXVI) adopted by the 66th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers in June 1997.

On 16 November 1999, the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at the Ambassadorial level, met in Addis Ababa and considered modalities for the operationalization of the Committee. The Central Organ formally welcomed the launching of the AWCPD and encouraged the Secretary General of the OAU to provide all possible assistance to facilitate and sustain its operationalization.

2.2 Mandates and Objectives of the AWCPD

The AWCPD was established to function as an advisory body to the Secretary General of the OAU and the Executive Secretary of the ECA to enhance the contribution of women to peace and development efforts in Africa.

According to its terms of reference, the Committee had the following mandates:

- A **Peace Mandate** of bringing women and a gender perspective into the mainstream of decision-making to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts.
- A **Development Mandate** to harness the continent's human and material resources for development, away from financing conflicts towards development.
- A **Capacity-building Mandate** to support conflict prevention initiatives and to promote a culture of peace and tolerance.
- A **Resources Mobilization Mandate** to find resources to support initiatives that further the Committee's mandate.
- An **Advocacy Mandate** to give women a voice at all levels on peace and development issues, and create strategies for gender justice.
- A **Monitoring Mandate** to keep track of the performance of governments, institutions and organizations vis-a vis a gender perspective in all their operations.
- A **Networking Mandate** to coordinate and facilitate communication between the various initiatives on gender in peace and development activities.
- A **Research and Information Gathering Mandate** to keep all stakeholders adequately informed.

The overall objective of the Committee was to promote and strengthen the involvement of women in the decision making process of peace building in Africa.

The immediate objectives of the Committee include,

- Identifying and establishing linkages and working relationships with relevant intergovernmental organizations interested in the advancement of peace building and conflict prevention, management and resolution, and with African NGOs and networks concerned with women's political rights and peace issues,
- Studying the major women-led conflict resolution tradition and mechanisms of African countries or regions involved in conflict or where conflict is expected or imminent, and take appropriate action to address such situations through applying those traditions and mechanisms, and through advocacy with the appropriate sub-regional, regional and international institutions,
- Providing current knowledge on the political, economic and social status of African women as a basis for development and for advocacy for women's rights and fair and equitable treatment,
- Establishment and maintenance of a data base on conflicts in Africa,
- Establishment and maintenance of a data base of African peace and women's organizations,
- Promoting a culture of peace through the inclusion of peace education and relevant issues in the informal education curricula of African States,
- Increasing the contribution of women in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts by including them in all formal peace negotiations, and consultations by women groups,
- Facilitating broad based dialogue between women from conflicting parties in situation of actual or potential conflict and assist in peaceful settlements.
- Harmonizing activities with relevant organizations and in particular with OAU.

2.3 Structure of the AWCPD

The Committee was made up of 16 members appointed by the Secretary General of the OAU in consultation with the Executive Secretary of the UNECA. The committee had a Board elected amongst the members of the Committee, and an independent Executive Secretariat.

The composition of the Committee was as follows:

- Six representatives of Governments of Member States.
- Five women appointed in their individual capacity, and

- Five women, representatives of NGOs as per the OAU criteria of geographic representation

The members of the Committee were all selected on the basis of their strong personality, their exposure to gender and development issues, and their involvement in conflicts and peace processes.

An interim secretariat at ECA was set up to facilitate the immediate operationalization of the Committee. Based in Addis Ababa, the AWCPD Secretariat acted as a liaison office between the Committee, the OAU, the ECA and other partners.

III. Outcomes of the Evaluations

3.1 The Performance of the Committee

Following the Central Organ's decision, AWCPD working with the OAU/ECA Secretariats developed and adopted a 3-year work program that mostly featured the immediate objectives of the Committee. Thereafter, the fund raising project based on the work program was completed and endorsed by the members of the Board of AWCPD in February 2000. The amount that was required to implement the activities of the AWCPD for the three years was approximately USD 1,104, 450.

The following were the activities carried out by AWCPD since its inaugural meeting in November 1998.

Peace Mandate – within its peace mandate, the Committee had,

- supported the peace efforts in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa,
- built an African Women's Agenda for Peace in Zanzibar; and
- contributed to the creation of the Mano River Women's Union Network within the Mano River Peace Initiative.

Development Mandate – under its development mandate, AWCPD,

- had participated in the Global Summit for Women held in October 2000 in South Africa that resulted in the Sandton Declaration with a resolution on the establishment of an African Development Bank for Women,

- was responsible for monitoring the peace and development component of the implementation of the African and Beijing Platforms for Action at the 6th African Regional Conference on Women held in November 1999.

Capacity-building Mandate – within the capacity-building mandate, AWCPD, involved

- more than 150 Burundian women during the Burundi Peace Initiative meeting held in Uganda,
- 180 women in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue Process, and
- 200 women at the Mano River Peace Process

Advocacy Mandate – under its advocacy mandate, AWCPD succeeded in bringing to the AU,

- the Zanzibar Agenda for Peace,
- the Additional Protocol on Women's Human rights, and
- the Durban Declaration on mainstreaming a gender perspective in the AU.
- The Committee provided its inputs to the UN Conference on Beijing +5 that finally contributed to the adoption of Resolution 1325

Monitoring Mandate – The Committee within its monitoring mandate,

- monitored the election in Nigeria in 1999,
- reviewed the implementation of the African and Beijing Platforms for Action with regards to peace,
- ensured that the OAU and UN passed a number of resolutions and decisions supporting women's advancement and effective participation in peace processes in Africa, as well as in the transformation of OAU to AU.

Networking Mandate – the Committee developed and strengthened networking with,

- African women's peace organizations that attended the Zanzibar Conference on a Culture of Peace,
- The Mano River Women's Peace Network,
- Organizations which attended the Kigali Conference on Women as Partners for Peace.
- Women's organization that attended the workshop "Linking HIV/AIDS to Women's Peace Advocacy".
- The Committee also used the various conferences and meetings organized by the OAU/AU as well as by international and regional organizations to introduce its mandates and functions.

Research and Information Mandate

- Eventhough the Committee didn't do much in this area, together with the African Leadership Forum (ALF) it organized a meeting in Tunis in January 2001 to review women's best practices in peace building in Somalia, the Mano River Basin, Burundi, etc.
- Database on major conflicts in Africa was developed by the Secretariat of the Committee – The data base provides background information on some major conflicts and resolution processes in Africa and sets recommendations to enhance Africa's peace building initiatives.
- Database on African Women's Organizations Working on Conflicts was als developed by the Secretariat – The data base is intended to facilitate the effective communication and information links for national, sub-regional and regional dialogue amongst women organizations working to promote peace in Africa.

Resources Mobilization Mandate – With the intention of mobilizing the required resources for the operation of AWCPD, Committee members visited New York, Geneva, Tunisia and Libya but without any success, due in part to lack of follow-up.

3.2 Constraints faced by the AWCPD

3.2.1. The Role and Institutional Linkages of the AWCPD vis-à-vis the Sponsoring Institutions (OAU/AU and ECA)

a) Lack of clear vision at the inception of the Committee

Despite the official declarations, the leadership of the OAU did not seem to have a clear vision of the role and place of the AWCPD in the organization. Eventhough an Inter-Departmental Task Force of the OAU that was set up a year after the establishment of the Committee provided valuable recommendations related to the legal status of the Committee vis-à-vis the OAU, its working relationship, and funding of the Committee, most of the recommendations never materialized.

b) Lack of clear guidance for the orientation of the Committee

Although the AWCPD was created as an autonomous body, as a new institution it didn't get the required guidance from the OAU and ECA as to how to conduct its missions and functions. The sponsoring institutions should have been more proactive in assisting the AWCPD to clarify its objectives and orientation as well as determine its strategies.

c) Lack of clarity in the role and institutional linkages between the AWCPD and the two sponsoring institutions

Despite the fact that the AWCPD was given the status of an advisory body to the Chief Executives of the OAU/AU and the ECA, the functions and responsibilities linked to this status were not clearly spelt out and were perceived differently by some members of the Committee, its Secretariat and the sponsoring institutions. Contrary to the wish of the AWCPD to have direct involvement in the meetings of the Central Organ, it was felt that the inputs or advisory services of the Committee should be channeled through the Secretary General of the OAU. However, no decision was taken on as to how the Committee could discharge its advisory functions as well as the reporting mechanisms.

There was a real confusion stemming from the multiplicity of lines of communications between the Committee and the OAU. The Committee had two different entry points to the OAU, the Community Affairs on the one hand, and the Political Affairs on the other. This was a source of confusion in the OAU itself, and of the tension between the OAU and the Committee.

The Committee was never associated to the OAU peace missions, Committee members could hardly access to the decision-makers of the two sponsoring institutions, and very often they did not know where to go or whom to contact. The Statutory provisions awarding Committee members to the Privileges and Immunities of the OAU were never implemented.

d) Lack of effective support from the two institutions

Initially the ECA offered to host the Secretariat of the Committee for a transitional period and extended financial and technical support to the Secretariat. The Secretary General of the OAU also made a donation to the AWCPD of \$ 150,000 on behalf of the organization. The OAU and ECA were expected to consult as to how to go beyond these transitional arrangements, but the consultation never took place. As a result, the temporary arrangements became permanent,

leading to major uncertainties in the relationship between the Committee and the two institutions.

Actually, the major impediment of the AWCPD may be the failure of the OAU and the ECA to provide the Executive Secretariat of the AWCPD with the required institutional and financial support. The Executive Secretariat was supposed to be the main implementing arm of the Committee. However, the staff required for a full-fledged Secretariat was not recruited. The Secretariat only consisted of an Interim Executive Officer assisted irregularly by an ad hoc secretary. Both the Interim Executive Officer and the secretary were working on the basis of short-term contracts the enforcement of which was always problematic. In this context, it was quite impossible for the AWCPD to discharge its functions.

3.2.2. The Terms of Reference of the Committee and its Governance Structure

a) Lack of Definition in the Terms of Reference and Internal Rules

The functioning and mandate of the Bureau vis-à-vis the Committee as a whole, and the Secretariat in particular were not clearly defined. The individual powers and duties of each member of the Bureau and the collective powers and duties of the Bureau were not clearly spelt out.

b) Lack of Understanding of the Mandate of the Executive Secretariat

The Rules and Procedures of the AWCPD did spell out the roles of the Secretariat and its staff. The Secretariat should have been fully staffed, supported and operational within the first six months of the Committee's formation. However, the Committee never finalized the recruitment of competent staff because of lack of funding. The Secretariat which should have been the operational arm of the Committee in the implementation of its work program, was confined to a role of facilitating ad hoc activities initiated from time to time by members of the Bureau. There was no clear strategy to guide the work of the Interim Secretariat in order to implement the work program of the Committee.

The Interim Secretariat was hosted with problems related to shortage of finance and manpower. There was no clarity as to who should be responsible for the sustenance of the Secretariat, especially given the inability of the Committee to mobilize resources consistent with the decision to establish an independent Committee.

3.2.3. Financial Resources

At the inception stage of the Committee, the financing aspect was not adequately addressed. The Rules and Procedures of the Committee states that the Committee shall mobilize resources to finance its activities, and determine the modalities related to this. Beyond that, however, there was little elaboration on whom or where the responsibility rested for providing the funds for the Committee's operations.

As per the Terms of Reference of the Committee, funding was to be obtained from contributions from the OAU and the ECA, particularly seed money for the launching, special donations and resources mobilization. Thus, it was expected that the OAU and ECA would jointly meet the institutional building and program costs for the AWCPD for an initial period.

Despite the fact that some efforts were made to raise funds no follow-up actions were undertaken. The Committee was unable to mobilize additional funds except for the seed money provided by the OAU, ECA and CIDA.

3.3. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the foregoing analysis, it has been clear that the AWCPD did not meet the expectations of its stakeholders. Actually, the main shortcoming of the AWCPD were related, among others, to

- an uncertain support and working relation with the two sponsoring institutions
- poor relationship between the leadership and the Committee members,
- lack of consensus amongst Committee members on the orientation of the AWCPD,
- an unrealistic work program,
- lack of financial resources, and
- a weak Executive Secretariat

Eventhough there have been conflicting opinions on the achievements of the Committee, the general view has been that the creation of the AWCPD was a great achievement for African women, and also a valuable asset to the entire continent. Most advocate that at minimum, credit could be given to the AWCPD regarding the advancement of women's agenda in a long list of key areas, including:

- Sensitizing the OAU on gender mainstreaming. Gender issues were initially peripheral in the agenda of the organization and dealt within a unit of a division. Today, the African Union has a Women, Gender and Development Directorate attached to the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission.
- Contribution to the resolution aimed at promoting and ensuring a policy of gender parity within the AU.
- Bringing women's voice into the peace process, in the Mano River, Great Lakes and in Somalia.
- Valuable contribution to the process of the evaluation of Beijing +5, that led to the adoption by the Security Council of the UN of Resolution 1325, which for the first time acknowledged the centrality of women's role in peace processes.
- The establishment of the database on major conflicts in Africa and of women's organizations working on conflicts.

Suffice to stress that the objectives that motivated the establishment of the Committee still hold. A remodeled AWCPD may bring innovative views and devises to help the African Union diffuse tensions in countries in conflict, and boost the peace building process in the continent. It was based on these considerations that the following recommendations were made on the renewal of the AWCPD and explore its future directions.

3.3.1. Clarification of the institutional linkages between the Committee and the AU and the ECA

- i) The AU is the premier political organization of the continent and should therefore take full responsibility of the institutional status of the AWCPD. Provisions should be made to institutionalize the AWCPD within the structures of the AU.
- ii) The AWCPD should be accountable to the AU.
- iii) As an Advisory Body to the Chairperson of the AU for peace and conflicts, the AWCPD should be linked to the Peace and Security, Political Affairs structures of the AU.
- iv) A Memorandum of Understanding shall clarify the supporting role of the ECA, and the working relationship between the AWCPD and the African Center for Gender and Development.

3.3.2. Recasting the Mandate and Mission of the AWCPD

- i) The focus of the AWCPD mandate should be to assist the AU in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and in dealing with post-conflict situations.
- ii) The main mission of the Committee should be: advisory mission, advocacy mission, networking mission, capacity building mission and monitoring mission.

3.3.3. Remodeling the composition of the AWCPD

- i) Membership to the Committee should be based on a combination of the following:
 - African women
 - Experience in peace and development issues
 - Exposure to women and gender issues
 - Proven experience in advocacy and negotiations
 - Proven capacity for resources mobilization
 - Highly respected at least at the national or sub-regional levels
 - Not holding a position that could place the person in a conflict of interest with the Committee
 - Not holding a political position
 - Outstanding personal traits, including team spirit, strong interpersonal skills and commitment.
- ii) The composition of the AWCPD should be fairly balanced to reflect the geographical distribution of the continent, and to maintain the integrity of the Committee.
- iii) The renewal procedure should be as democratic and transparent as possible. It should involve all stakeholders, including women organizations at the national, sub-regional and continental level.
- iv) Provisions should be made in the renewal procedure to ensure that there is some continuity in the membership of the Committee.
- v) The Committee members shall elect a bureau that will be responsible for guiding the operations of the AWCPD for the duration of the term.
- vi) The duties and responsibilities of the Bureau should be clearly spelt out to maintain the cohesion of the Committee, while avoiding conflicts of interests

- vii) Attention should be given to strengthening the Committee members' capacity and skills in conflict resolution and peace building.

3.3.4. Strengthening the Executive Secretariat

- i) The Secretariat of the AWCPD shall be located within the Headquarters of the AU.
- ii) The AU should extend full and permanent institutional support to the Secretariat, including paying the salaries of agreed staff.
- iii) The Secretariat shall be an independent body responsible for organizing and coordinating the activities of the Committee, including among others, implementing the decisions of the Bureau, advising the Committee on the work program and resources mobilization, and communicating with the focal points at the AU and the ECA.
- iv) The Executive Secretariat should have strong management and fund raising skills and should be a strategic thinker.

3.3.5. Streamlining the Work Program

- i) The work program should be aimed at operationalizing the missions of the AWCPD, with realistic and effective prioritization of the agenda.
- ii) The work program of the AWCPD should be guided by the principle that the Committee has a coordination and orientation role, and is not an implementing body.
- iii) The work program of the AWCPD should give more emphasis and concern to field works with a view to assisting women organizations at sub-regional and national levels.
- iv) The work program of the AWCPD shall be elaborated in consultation with the AU.
- v) The AU shall be associated to the monitoring and evaluation of the work program of the Committee.
- vi) The resources of the work program should come from fund raising by the Executive Secretariat and the Committee members with the support of the AU.

IV. ECA's Point of View on the State of the AWCPD

ECA and OAU/AU were planning to create the appropriate forum to present to the women groups the outcomes of the evaluations which recommended for the renewal of the AWCPD with clear institutional framework, revised mandate, remodeled membership composition, strong executive secretariat and streamlined work program. One of the most important recommendations related to the institutional framework was that AU should take full responsibility of the institutional status of the AWCPD and that AWCPD should be accountable to the AU. In this connection, it was recommended that the Secretariat of the AWCPD be housed within the Headquarters of AU.

However, the Third Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the AU passed a decision (Annex 1- EX/CL/Dec.66(III) July 2003, Maputo, Mozambique) to integrate the AWCPD in the new structure of the Union.

**DECISION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF
ACTIVITIES OF THE WOMEN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

The Executive Council:

1. **RECALLS** that the broad objective of the gender programme of the AU is to promote the emancipation of African women and gender equality, in order to ensure that women and men have equal access to factors needed for their equal and unhindered participation in development and other processes that shape and define their conditions of life and work;
2. **WELCOMES** the recent positive developments in the AU Commission regarding the mainstreaming of gender issues into all the initiatives for implementation of the Durban Decisions through the Gender Task Force;
3. **CALLS UPON** the AU Commission to set in motion the process leading up to the elaboration of an AU Policy and Declaration on Gender to inspire, inform and provide the framework within which gender issues are to be tackled within the African Union, and guide the activities of the Commission as well as the Member States in this area;
4. **ALSO CALLS UPON** the AU Commission to elaborate an effective strategy for the Commission which will provide guidelines on how to mainstream gender into the activities of the Commission as well as Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) together with indicators for tracking, monitoring and evaluating progress, in order to facilitate the advancement of women as an integral part of all social, political, economic and cultural development initiatives undertaken by AU;
5. **FURTHER CALLS UPON** the AU Commission to elaborate an implementation and coordination framework, including a gender management system, which links and streamlines gender work within the Commission, the other organs of the AU, the Member States, the RECs and the other stakeholders.
6. **UNDERScores** the need for the African Union to pursue the process aimed at operationalising the African Women's Committee for Peace and Development particularly to its harmonious integration in the new structures of the Union and report thereon to the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Executive Council.