

“Second Day of ADF VI Focuses on Gender and Socio-economic, Socio-cultural and political rights”

ECA Press Release No. 34/2008

Addis Ababa, 20 November 2008 – Day two of the [Sixth African Development Forum \(ADF VI\)](#), currently underway Addis Ababa, opened with a rousing appeal from the Gambia's Vice-President, Her Excellency Mrs. Isatou Njie-Saidy.

“What is required now is ACTION”, Mrs. Njie-Saidy told the approximately 800 participants in the packed main conference room of the United Nations Conference Centre at ECA headquarters in the Ethiopian capital.

“Women out there are waiting” she added, “they have waited too long and we can not fail them!”

The Gambian leader also stressed the importance of including men in the battle for women's rights. “We can not address the issue of women without addressing men”, she noted, “Otherwise we will be marginalized and we will fail. We have to look at both sides of the coin to be fair. We must also remember that, as we point a finger at the men, three fingers are pointing back at us.”

Mrs. Isatou Njie-Saidy ended her message with action orientated advice for the ADF VI participants: “We have to do things differently. When we leave this conference we have to leave with action plans that are doable. Conferences are a means to an end.”

Her message was followed by that of another special guest to the Forum, Her Royal Highness, Sylvia Nagginda, Queen of the Buganda Kingdom in the Republic of Uganda . Queen Sylvia's statement focused on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment and the role of traditional leaders in promoting reproductive rights and health.

After making a cogent case for the role of traditional leaders in promoting development in Africa , Her Royal Highness, made a number of recommendations to the Forum. These included a proposal that governments and NGOs should partner more with traditional leaders when promoting programmes in reproductive health.

Following the messages from dignitaries, the Forum's sessions were split into two plenary sessions in the morning and several thematic breakout sessions in the afternoon, which allowed participants to discuss issues raised during the plenary in greater depth.

A highlight of the morning was the presentation made to ADF VI by the International Gender Expert, Dr. Marianna Jacinta Muteshi, on the issue of “Financing for Gender Equality”.

Dr. Muteshi received vigorous applause at various moments during her engaging remarks. However, she provoked a particularly intense response from participants when she pinpointed “a flaw in the way we think about development and deliver development”, strongly challenged the existing paradigm of financing national development and appealed for a new approach that is more gender aware and inclusive.

“What possible confidence can we have in development programming and the allocation of resources”, she asked, “if the *engendered nature of our lives* is not taken into account?”

Adv. Bience Gawanas, the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, who spoke on “Gender and Health”, meanwhile, stressed the importance of considering all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when looking at issues of health in Africa . In that regard, she highlighted the fact that “health is not gender blind and health interventions must not be gender blind”.

Commissioner Gawanas also emphasized the importance of culture specificities in Africa and ended the morning plenary sessions with this appeal “(as) we give a cultural context to our discussions let us also recognize the centrality of culture in promoting health”.

For full details of all ADF VI sessions and thematic areas see: <http://www.uneca.org/adfvi/index.asp>

The Forum ends on Friday 21 November 2008.

P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Tel: 251 11 5445098
Fax: +251-11-551 03 65
E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org
Web: www.uneca.org
