

## Decade of African women should not be a decade of words” – 7th Session of the CWD reviews Banjul Declaration and discusses new strategies

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Addis Ababa, 17 May 2011 (ECA) - The 7th Session of the Committee on Women and Development (CWD) opened on Tuesday at the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Under the theme “Closing Gaps, Maximizing Opportunities: Beyond Beijing + 15”, more than 100 participants have convened for the four-day-meeting to discuss progress made, challenges faced and strategies required regarding gender equality and women’s advancement with a special focus on the Banjul Declaration (2009) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).

In her opening statement, Jennifer Kargbo, ECA’s Deputy Executive Secretary, underlined that the meeting should contribute towards crystallizing the strategies that will guide the work of governments, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), CSOs and partners in the coming years. “The task before us is challenging given the range of issues covered in the Banjul Declaration and the tremendous urgency to meet the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs”, she said.

Although there are still major challenges and even regressions, one of the remarkable achievements of the last years is increased representation and participation of women in all areas of decision-making, “with Rwanda leading the league with 56% women MPs, followed by South Africa and Mozambique with over 30%”, Kargbo noted.

Another important step on the way to gender equality was the launch of the United Nations newest organization - “UN Women” - earlier this year. “This is a milestone in the global effort in addressing gender issues and ensuring women benefit from development initiatives”, said Mr. Kajali Sonko, the Chair of the CWD Bureau in The Gambia. “This new entity comes at the most crucial time of the MDG process.”

The meeting will serve as a forum for technical input and strategic thinking and as a platform for the exchange of best practices and the discussion of new strategies, according to ECA’s Information and Communication Service.

Litha Musyimi-Ogana, the Director of Women and Gender at the AUC, assured the attendees that “the African Union will facilitate the outcomes of this meeting to be tabled at the 4th Ordinary meeting of Ministers of Gender and Women’s Affairs which will be convened in October this year.”



Jennifer Kargbo, ECA's Deputy Executive Secretary



For her part, Florence Butegwa, the UN Women Representative to the AUC and the ECA stated that the agenda of this session is important, not just for the ECA, but for all members of the UN Family, which, she said “individually and collectively are obligated to support the efforts of countries in the implementation of international and regional commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment.” She urged the participants, which included experts from Gender and Women’s Affairs Ministries, RECs, the ECA, UN Agencies, the AUC and the African Development Bank, to “revisit the strategies agreed on in Banjul, and make urgent recommendations in this area.”

The Agenda for the next days includes discussions on the Africa UNITE Campaign on Violence against Women (VAW), which was launched in January 2010.

Ends.

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