

7th CWD sheds light on gender issues in North Africa's democratic transition

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Addis Ababa, 20 May 2011 (ECA) - Emerging gender issues in North Africa during the recent events calling for transition to democracy were at the centre of Friday afternoon's session of the 7th Committee on Women and Development (CWD).

Presentations made by representatives from Tunisia, Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire and Algeria made it clear that women in North Africa have been widely underrepresented in almost every part of the decision-making process according to the Information and Communication Service of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

"In Tunisia there are only 20 percent women on the decision-making level, and we are far from the 30 percent recommended by the United Nations," one representative said.

"Women have been excluded for a long time from many different areas and the ruling class has always given privilege to a few people." It was underlined, that amongst those Tunisians who used social networks like Facebook and Twitter to mobilize people for the Revolution of January 2011, there were many women.

The representative from Morocco pointed out that "the marginalization of women has been one of the major causes of the revolution." New mechanisms are needed to ensure human rights and equal power-sharing between men and women, she said: "The issues of women must finally be taken seriously."

Côte d'Ivoire was also cited as having poor participation of women in the decision-making sectors for many years. "We started organizing ourselves", the representative from the West African State said. "Our priority for the next years will be Peace and Security".

The Algerian representative explained that the situation in her country was a bit different from other North African experiences, "because we have suffered from terrorism for many years which has been affecting all sectors of society." She added: "For a long time we couldn't even talk about gender equality." But progress is on the way, with the 30 percent quota being introduced, although violence against women still remains a major problem in the country."

Ends.

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