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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

*Report on technical assistance mission
undertaken in Kigali, Rwanda from 18 February to 5 March 1997
for the organization of the Pan-African Conference on Peace,
Gender and Development*

prepared by

*Françoise Wege
Social Affairs Officer
African Centre for Women (ACW)*

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I. INTRODUCTION

At the initiative of the Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women and the Coalition of Rwandese Women's Non-Governmental Organizations, a Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender Equality and Development was organized in Kigali, Rwanda, from 1st to 3rd March 1997. The conference was considered as a follow-up to the Regional and Global Platforms for Action which identified Peace as a priority area of concerns for African Women. It was organized under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa with the substantive and financial inputs from the Netherlands Government, UNDP and UNIFEM. Additional financial support was provided by UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR.

In order to ensure adequate preparation of and the smooth running of the Conference, the Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women requested ECA to assist in the finalization of the preparatory process and the actual organization of the Conference. ECA accepted the invitation and the cost of the mission was covered by the UNDP.

The mission was undertaken by a team of two: Ms. Joyce Mends-Cole, UNDP Senior Regional Advisor on Gender and Ms. Françoise Wege, ECA Social Affairs Officer. The team was joined on 1 March by Ms. Mebo Mwaniki, Chief of the ECA/African Centre for Women. The work of the team was facilitated by the full support received from the UNDP country office.

II. PURPOSE OF THE MISSION

The purpose of the mission was to assist the organizers in:

- the finalization of the Conference preparation including the time-table for the Conference;

- reviewing the working papers of the Conference, especially the Kigali Declaration and Plan of Action;
- substantive servicing of the Conference.

III. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MISSION

In line with the above mission objectives, the team took part in the review of the Conference papers, the drawing-up of the programme for the Conference with special attention to the synchronisation of planned activities, and more importantly the drafting of the Draft Kigali Declaration and Plan of Action, the major outcome of the conference.

Below are the highlights of some major issues:

1. Purpose of the Conference

The Conference was an attempt to raise the world's attention on the prominent role women can play in building lasting peace and sustainable development on the continent.

2. Participation

The Conference attracted a great number of high officials, Parliamentarians, Activists in Peace Movements, NGOs and the international community. Special guests who attended the Conference were: Mrs Mary Robinson, President of Ireland, Mrs Speciosa Kazibwe, Vice-President of Uganda, Ambassador Pascal Gayama, Assistant secretary general of the Organization of African Unity, Mrs Zaneli Mbeki, wife of the Vice-President of South Africa, Mrs Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth world Conference on Women, Dr Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the UNFPA, Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Assistant to the UNDP Administrator and Director of the Africa Regional Bureau.

3. Major issues

Technical papers were presented around the following themes:

- The Critical Events in Rwanda History - Lessons to be drawn
- Gender, Peace and Development-Linkages for Progress
- Effective partnerships for promotion of a culture of peace

Four working groups were thereafter organized for a thorough discussion of the issues. The themes generated very rich debates. The Plan of action and Declaration which summarizes conclusions of the debates are attached.

In addition to the above, visits to the genocide sites and to the Peace Village were organized. They gave an opportunity to demonstrate the magnitude of the tragedy which Rwanda went through in 1994. The visits were very moving and a message from the President of South Africa calling for peace was read at the Nelson Mandela Peace Village.

At the end of the Conference, the creation of a Regional Network of Women on Peace was announced and it was decided that the Network will have its headquarters in Kigali.

IV. CONSULTATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN

A consultation meeting was held with the Minister of Family and Promotion of Women, the UNDP Resident representative, the UNDP Senior Regional Advisor on Gender and the OAU and ECA delegations on 4 March 1997 at the Minister's Office. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the Conference and discuss about follow-up action.

Everyone agreed that the Conference had been very inspiring and productive and had been successful in raising participants' awareness on the prominent role women

could play in conflict areas. The Minister took the opportunity of the meeting to thank the three organizations for their full support and called on their assistance for ensuring follow-up to this Conference.

V. CONCLUSION

The mission was able to meet its objectives of assisting on one hand the in substantive preparation of the Conference and in reflecting on follow-up action.

By the end of the Conference, every participant was convinced that a more participatory role for women in the resolution of conflicts could bring a new perspective in the on-going efforts of restoring peace on the continent. Participants made strong commitment to contribute to peace efforts.

VI. FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Action required as follow-up to this mission is:

- i) Dissemination of the conclusions of the Conference through the African Regional Committee for Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) and the ECA and OAU legislative organs;
- ii) UNDP assistance in mobilization of development partners based in Kigali to ensure the implementation of recommendations which emerged from the conference;
- iii) ECA/ACW assistance in strengthening the Ministry of Family and Promotion of Women in building its capacity for gender mainstreaming

KIGALI DECLARATION ON PEACE, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

We the Women of Africa meeting in Kigali, Rwanda on 03 March 1997 at the Pan-African Conference on Gender, Peace, and Development,

Recalling the Kampala Declaration on Peace, the African and global Platforms of Action and the resolutions of the Johannesburg Women leadership Forum on Peace,

Concerned about continued internal armed conflicts on the continent and in the Great Lakes regions in particular and the consequences of war on the lives of ordinary people especially women and Children,

Mindful of the recent genocide in Rwanda which is a scar on the African conscience and an experience never to be repeated on the continent but encouraged by the efforts of reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda.

Noting with great concern African women's lack of awareness of their civic and human rights

Determined to contribute to conflict prevention and conflict resolution in Africa by introducing our perspectives, priorities and culture to all peace-making initiatives.

Do declare that:

Peace is a pre-requisite for Development

We commit ourselves to the prevention and peaceful-resolution of conflicts on our continent,

We demand from our governments recognition of women's traditional peace-making roles and their rights to equal involvement in all peace initiatives including early warning mechanisms and swift responses at national, regional and international levels,

We urge the Secretary General of the OAU to accelerate establishment of the African Women Committee on Peace (AWCP) and ask our governments to give full support to the process,

We encourage Governments and NGOs and international Organisations to develop and increase civic and human rights education programmes for grassroots women,

We affirm that peace can only be built on equality and freedom from injustice,

We urge African Governments to adhere to the rule of law and enforce respect for human and women's rights,

We call upon the OAU and UN to establish a compensation fund for the victims of genocide in Rwanda. And ask all governments to cooperate in bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice,

We urge the UN particularly the UNDP to assist in organising an immediate mission of eminent women to Burundi in order to support women's initiatives for peace and to examine the effects of the embargo on the people of Burundi and provide informed recommendations,

We request the OAU and ECA to follow up implementation of the Kigali Plan of Action including mobilising resources for its realisations,

We commit ourselves to establishing and strengthening partnerships of men and women, Government, media NGOs and the private sector for peace in our countries,

Poverty and ignorance are major sources of conflicts,

We urge our Governments and the International Community to give priority to poverty eradication policies and programmes which foster the economic empowerment and advancement of women.

Kigali, 3rd March 1997

**PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE
ON
"PEACE-GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT"
KIGALI, 1-3 MARCH 1997**

Plan of Action for Conflict - Affected Areas

As African countries liberated themselves from the yoke of colonialism, its people were buoyed by the hope that they could now turn their attention to the urgent issues of development. All too quickly, their hopes were dashed as many of their societies were torn by conflict and crisis.

Women, major contributors to the liberation struggles, were affected particularly as they realized that their visions for their societies would not materialize without further sacrifice. They envisioned a continent where people would live in peace, security and stability, with women and men working together for the development of their countries.

As a result of their continued efforts and many years of struggle, there is now a global consensus that human progress and development cannot occur without peace and gender equality. This consensus has been articulated eloquently and comprehensively in the Global Platform for Action, for which the African Platform was a major contribution.

The Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender Equality and Development, held in Kigali, Rwanda, is another significant step in maintaining the spirit and momentum of Beijing and for moving ahead in the implementation of the African and Global Platforms for Action. Women's vision for peace recognizes that "Peace is not just the absence of war, violence and hostilities, but rather a situation where all people have equal access to economic and social justice, to the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the environment is protected".

Hosted and inspired by the women of Rwanda, this Conference marks a critical point in the painful passage from the 1994 genocide to present day efforts towards healing, peace-building and the advancement of women.

We, the delegates to this Conference, having realized the need for the women of Africa to take immediate, practical actions to forge unity and promote sustainable peace, hereby commit ourselves to this Plan of Action for the achievement of the goals of gender equality, peace and development, paying particular attention to conflict-affected areas of Africa.

Building Justice and a Culture of Peace

JUSTICE

The principal objective is to strengthen efforts to build societies based on justice and the rule of law. A foundation for these societies must be the promotion and protection of human rights for everyone.

Proposed Actions

1. Law Reform

Ensure women's de jure equality through reform of national laws and policies, eliminating discriminatory provisions and incorporating specific provisions on women's rights. National laws should conform to international conventions.

Promote the full implementation of these provisions through vigorous and extensive information and sensitization campaigns, targeting men in particular, to build a social consensus on women's rights.

Promote legal literacy for women in particular and men in general and ensure women's access to free or low-cost legal services. A special emphasis should be placed on reaching rural women.

Strong efforts should be made to involve women at all stages of review, debate and implementation of legislation.

Increase the access of women to formal and non-formal legal systems.

2. In the aftermath of Genocide, Armed Conflict and Widespread Violence

Place an emphasis on the provision of protection and rehabilitation for victims, particularly those who have been subjected to sexual torture and abuse. Programs for rape victims should be integrated into broader programs, if possible, to ensure that rape victims are not further stigmatized.

The commitment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to prosecute rape marked a new consensus on rape as a war crime. The Rwandan Tribunal, empowered explicitly to prosecute rape as a war crime, should treat this duty seriously and begin the urgent task of prosecuting this crime. Following this example, other countries should make efforts to ensure that rape, on a large scale during armed conflict, is defined and prosecuted as a war crime.

Assure protection for witnesses to violence and provide a safe environment for their testimony.

Victims of genocide, armed conflict, apartheid and violence all have a need to be heard. This is an important element for their catharsis and for their societies to know the truth and extent of past abuses. Hearings and other fora should be held to allow victims to tell their stories.

Orchestrators and perpetrators should be provided with fora to detail their involvement in abuses and to express remorse for these actions.

Reparations are critical for a reconciliation process. Where leaders have looted national resources and deposited them outside a country, there should be regional and international cooperation to retrieve these assets and ensure their utilization for the development of that country. An independent mechanism, to oversee reparation payments and other forms of contributions to victims, may be necessary.

Establish a fund for the victims of genocide and massacres in Rwanda utilizing the assets of those convicted of genocide and augmented by contributions from countries, institutions and people interested in supporting this initiative.

Promote a global agreement on the extradition of people charged with crimes against humanity to ensure that no country is a safe haven for such people.

Prevent the refoulement of refugees and promote acceptance, by host countries, of their obligations to refugees as provided in international law.

Refugee and displaced women have enormous strength, endurance and resourcefulness. They must be involved in decisions that affect them and their skills should be utilized in all assistance initiatives.

Voluntary participation by prisoners in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts should be encouraged and facilitated as a contribution to reconciliation.

A CULTURE OF PEACE

Promoting a culture of peace will increase the understanding that violence is not a solution to real and perceived differences. A culture of peace is based on justice, tolerance and compassion. In Africa, the importance of community enriches this global culture and should be protected and nurtured.

Proposed Actions

1. Information Exchange

Ensure that mechanisms for information sharing are objective and non-partisan. Information should be given in local languages and disseminated in a form that is easily understandable. This can be achieved through:

- providing fora where women can freely discuss and exchange information, without interference from parties to a conflict.
- facilitating visits by women across the lines of conflicts.
- fostering a vibrant, independent media, including the creation of regional radio stations to promote peace and gender equality.
- ensuring freedom of speech for all persons and of the press.

Rwanda should be used as an example of the consequences of violence and conflict and a warning to all people. Leaders, especially those promoting violence, should be encouraged to learn about Rwanda in order to understand fully the implications of divisive and inequitable policies.

In situations of rising conflict, organize visits by women and men who have experienced the horrors of full-scale violence as a preemptive measure, to prevent the escalation of the conflict.

Organize regular exchanges between women's peace organizations in order to build effective partnerships for greater impact in peace efforts, to learn from each others' experiences, and to analyze together the strengths and weaknesses of past efforts.

2. Education

Promote education which develops the full potential of girls and boys and ensures that they play active and constructive role in their societies. Components can be:

- education on civic and human rights.
- a school curriculum that promotes critical thinking and analysis.
- affirmative action measures to keep girls in school, accompanied by information campaigns for parents and supplementary measures to facilitate girls' entry to schools.

Organize education programs for local leaders and officials to promote good governance (promoting women's and children's rights, accountability, impartiality, peace education, reconciliation mechanisms, etc.)

3. Culture

Promote those cultural aspects and traditions which are supportive of women's advancement and foster peace and development. Dance, poetry, theater, films music are important expressions of a society and can be used for positive change.

4. Good Governance

Strengthen mechanisms for sound and just governance. Transparency of processes of decision-making to ensure equitable use of resource and accountability are critical elements.

Promote women's participation in governance to ensure that their qualitatively different perspectives influence national decision-making and redirect priorities for the good of the whole nation. Encourage visionary, just and inclusive leadership through women's participation, the dissemination of best practices and positive reinforcements.

Support the use of a wide variety of local mechanisms for conflict resolution and reinforce coping mechanisms at the grass-root and household level to manage conflicts.

PEACE MECHANISMS FOR GENDER RESPONSIVENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

1. Early Warning Mechanisms

Strengthen early-warning systems on human rights violations for timely, preventive action. Despite the existence, in many cases, of vibrant human rights actors and communities, there is still a need to ensure that the critical information is properly documented, analyzed, disseminated and utilized. These actions are essential for diminishing tensions in societies and preventing potential conflicts.

Women should organize campaigns to prevent and end violence and killings in their communities and countries.

Support women's early interventions and strategies for conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution. Strengthen women's organizations to act as advocates for peace in decision-making mechanisms and arenas at all levels.

All conflicts do not have the same root causes. Therefore, there is a need to develop a variety of innovative strategies and mechanisms for rapid response.

Promote open societies - ones in which all citizens have full rights and participate freely in national affairs - a free press is an integral part of guaranteeing an open society.

2. National and International Mechanisms

The recent UN report on the International Tribunal for Rwanda exposes the abysmal mismanagement and ineffectiveness of this mechanism. The international community should give high priority to the reorganization and close monitoring of this mechanism and to the creation of a permanent, well-resourced and managed international court. Efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the investigations of the tribunal should be increased.

Research traditional conflict resolution methods and mechanisms, particularly those created and used by women, in order to strengthen and disseminate those which have been particularly effective.

Study and document the mechanisms and processes for reconciliation and ending impunity in a variety of countries, in order to modify and replicate in other situations. Southern American countries and South Africa provide important examples of these processes.

Strengthen and provide concrete support to women's initiatives in recovery, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. General

Create and ensure support for independent bodies of African women and women's peace movements, including the newly launched Federation of Women's Peace Movements.

Form an international support group for the women of Rwanda, to advocate for and assist in peace and development initiatives.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACE, GENDER EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The achievement of these three objectives requires a strong partnership between women, civil society, the private sector, the government and the international community.

Proposed Actions

Development partners should encourage the emergence and sustainment of a vigorous civil society through support for women's groups, grassroot organizations and decentralization processes.

Donor assistance procedures should be reviewed, to make them appropriate for support to women's local initiatives and grass-roots organizations. In this context donors should make

every effort to ensure that initiatives are internally-driven.

All partners must emphasize assistance for capacity-building, particularly for women to analyze, articulate and address their needs. In this process efforts to strengthen 'women's ways of leading' should be emphasized.

Governments should respect the commitments made at Beijing and accelerate efforts to implement the principles.

The private sector should make deliberate efforts to create an enabling environment for women's economic initiatives and support poverty-alleviation strategies e.g. contributing to funds to provide capital for poor women and investing in sectors which will affect women's lives beneficially.

All partners should translate commitments into concrete actions to ensure that women contribute to and receive the benefits of rehabilitation, reintegration and development initiatives.

All partners, particularly those providing financial resources, should utilize funds to support the activities of women's peace groups and their participation in the highest levels of decision-making.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

The principal objective is to eradicate poverty and to attain sustainable development and economic empowerment for a lasting peace.

Proposed Actions

1. Ending the Feminization of Poverty

Adopt and strengthen macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs of women in poverty.

Cancel all commercial and multi-lateral debt for Rwanda and ensure that the funds thereby released are targeted to assist poor women in particular.

Restructure and target the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities and equal access to productive resources.

Provide or strengthen safety nets to enable poor women to withstand adverse economic environments and preserve their livelihood bases in times of crisis.

Ensure the minimum of basic needs, particularly shelter, water, health-care and education.

2. Military Expenditures

Reduce military expenditures to increase the resources available for social development.

Utilize all effective strategies to encourage disarmament and the demilitarization of societies.

Promote global action to reduce and eventually, end the production and trade of arms.

3. Economic Empowerment of Women

Create an enabling environment for women to participate fully in economic development. This could include:

- developing women-specific conceptual and practical methodologies, and applying these to incorporate gender perspectives into all aspects of economic policy-making.
- adopting land reform policies and strategies which ensure access and ownership by women.
- Increasing efforts to demine land, particularly land used for agricultural purposes, and ensure access and use by women for productive purposes.
- ensuring access of women to property, and other resources through legal reform, (information and training of women will be necessary to increase their knowledge of rights and possibilities).
- reforming of investment codes and other legislation, to increase women's economic choices, employment and activities.
- affirmative action in areas including employment, training, credit, social services.

Provide technical training to women in all sectors, in order to improve their skills and participation in formal and informal economic activities.

Macro-level strategies may need to challenge existing structures, rather than integrating women into them. While working to increase women's enterprises and profits, efforts must be made to address inequality at the local, national and international levels.

Income-generation projects may be based upon an unrealistic assessment of women's time availability. All partners should review their support to women's micro-enterprise, to ensure high qualitative and quantitative impact.