



EDITORIAL

The creation of a new UN entity called “UN-Women”, which was operational in January 2011 and headed by the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, gives more hope to women. It is possible to believe that, with UN-Women progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment will increase and consequently all the other Millennium Development Goals will be achieved.

It is in this framework that WILDAF-West Africa Newsletter would like to share with its readers, especially women of rural areas who have less access to information, making them more aware of the new institution through the article “UN-Women: A New Hope for African women?”.

Through the “Network news” you will learn about some of the activities undertaken during the past three months, such as participation in the 55th session of the United Nations on the Status of Women, the activities regarding the ownership of the African Women’s Decade by WILDAF networks both at national and sub regional levels.

The section “Africa News” and “World News” will give you information on various actions taken worldwide regarding gender equality and violence against women.

Enjoy your reading!

Beatrice AJAVON
Communication officer



Also available on our website:

www.wildaf-ao.org/eng

You are member of WILDAF/FeDDAF West African Network and wish to publicize your activities? WILDAF-West Africa newsletter is a quarterly publication of the WILDAF sub regional office. Send us your text (long or short, what counts is the content!) by e-mail to WILDAF West Africa. The deadline for the reception of the texts is:

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UN-WOMEN: A NEW HOPE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN?

The United Nations Organisation for gender equality and women's empowerment or UN-Women which was launched on 24th February 2011 in New York during the 55th United Nations session on Women's Condition is now a new composite entity dedicated to women's promotion. One of its roles is also to demand accountability from the UN system on the progress in its commitment regarding gender equality, namely a regular follow-up in the advancement registered at all levels.

UN Women results from the merging and consolidation of the four distinct components devoted to gender issues and the promotion of gender equality which are the **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**, the United Nations *International Research and Training Institute (INSTRAW)*, the Office of the **Special Advisor for Gender Issues (OSAGI)** and the **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**.



UN Women was created in July 2010 and made official following the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution A/64/L.56 for the creation of the new entity. It became definitely operational only after six months and is headed by an Executive Director who has the rank of an Assistant General Secretary. We also notice that Mrs. Michelle Bachelet was appointed at this post on 14th September 2010 by the UN General Secretary at the end of a long recruitment process. Mrs. Bachelet, let us remind it, was President of Chile from 2006 to 2010.

Was the creation of such an entity indispensable?

At first sight, one could believe that the creation of a new structure, with all possible debates, is a loss of energy and time the outcome of which would probably be more harmful to women. Of course, the four distinct UN components dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment as well as the small structures such as unity for parity, the advisors for equality between sexes, the gender focal points were doing their best for promoting women's status at all levels. Nevertheless, it should be remarked, through the various reports on the subject, that the outcomes of the actions carried out by these structures on the field are insufficient and far from expected results regarding the efforts invested.

These structures were all limited in their respective mandates and generally had little financial resources. Their structuring did not allow them to carry out coherent and coordinated actions. Moreover, they practically had no decision-making power in the broad UN machinery.

Facing the emergency of reaching objective 3, the inescapable force for attaining all the other Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the deadline of which is 2015, it was necessary to react more ardently. It was necessary to have a unique, strengthened, mature and better funded organ. Thus, taking the opportunity of the global UN reform aiming at putting resources and attributions together in order to maximise results, women's movements namely GEAR and some determined States, carried out a strong campaign that resulted in the creation of UN-Women by the General Assembly. *"The decision to establish UN-Women reflects a general frustration in front of the slowness of change. It is no more acceptable to live in a world where girls are school drop-outs and compelled to forced marriages from early age, a world where employment opportunities for women are limited and where the threat of sexist violence is daily – at home, in the street, at school and at work"* Mrs. Bachelet declared in her speech during the launching ceremony on 24th February of the all-mighty institution she is heading. With confidence in this initiative, the UN General Secretary, Mr. Ban Ki-moon will declare: *"It is an historic turning point... From now on, it will be much more difficult to ignore the challenges women and girls are facing or to omit taking the necessary measures."*

Acting for gender equality to become a reality

According to the Executive Director of the new entity, the vision of UN-Women is a world in which men and women enjoy the same opportunities and capacities, where women are empowered and the principles of gender equality are firmly integrated to all efforts developed in order to make development, peace and security progress. As first manager, she says she is determined for UN-Women to become *"a veritable catalyst of change"*. In that purpose, the institution has set, as fundamental objective, the building of national capacities and ownership so as to enable national partners to develop laws and policies that take gender perspective into account as well as strengthening efficient strategies to ensure national commitments taken in the benefit of gender equality.

Continued on page 3

UN-WOMEN: A NEW HOPE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN?

For reaching this objective, UN-Women decided to focus its actions on 5 priority themes. The choice of the 5 themes results from a long consultation of its various partners, in particular, civil society organisations working on the women's promotion. *"During my consultation with partners, I noted a certain number of clear messages: UN-Women must focus on a reduced number of issues and reach visible and "significant" outcomes; it must work with all the UN system and not in competition with it; it must build its work on achieved results while improving and deepening them; it must think of going down on the field. What is more important is we must favour the support to national partners at each country level"* the UN-Women Director tells in her opening speech of the 55th session of the UN Commission on Women's Status in New York on last 22nd March.

Let us remark that the Executive Director took the opportunity of this important session for solemnly announcing the 5 priority themes. She particularly affirmed that her institution will care for strengthening women's influence, leadership and participation in working with partners in order to fill the gaps. She will work to put an end to violence against women by helping countries to identify mechanisms likely to fight this plague. The third priority will consist in reinforcing women's participation at all levels of conflict settlement and of the peace process. UN-Women will also work for strengthening women's economic empowerment in relying on governments and international partners. Finally, she will insert the priorities regarding gender equality in the heart of national, local and sectional planning, budgeting and statistics.

The effectiveness of actions will be based on five fundamental principles, the UN-Women Executive Director indicated. It will consist in offering a significant support to national partners; to support intergovernmental processes related to gender equality; to get mobilised around gender equality, women's empowerment and the respect of women and girls' rights; to ensure the coordination and coherence of the UN system's actions regarding gender equality and finally to act as a middle organ regarding knowledge and experience.

Are sufficient resources available to UN-Women?

One of the weaknesses of the four preceding entities dedicated to gender equality was the insufficient resources both human and financial available to them. This situation weakened them in front of the needs on the field. Furthermore, this explains the creation of UN-Women in order to bring resources together. *"UN-Women has inherited the resources of the four entities that merged into its creation"* declared Mrs Bachelet in an interview to UNESCO.

Other voluntary contributions will be added. In fact, on the recommendation of the UN member States, the budget of the new entity should be at least USD 500 million a year. Thus this figure represents more than two times the budgets of the four preceding entities put together.

Nevertheless, some estimates remark that despite this substantial progression, the new entity's budget is still modest in comparison to the real needs on the field and think of an amount of at least 1 billion. A little comparison with other UN agencies such as UNICEF the budget of which is three billion dollars and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 5 billion reveals the truth. These two agencies have resources respectively 6 or 10 times more important than UNO-Women. Regarding human resources, the problem is neither completely solved. Mrs. Michelle Bachelet has at her disposal about 300 people against 7200 for UNICEF.

This situation obliges the new entity to be present only in 80 countries for answering the most pressing needs. She should temporarily rely on UNPD in other countries if necessary.

Which place for the civil society in the definition of UN-Women's policies?

The civil society partners, particularly the global women's movement have tremendously contributed to the birth of UN-Women. For these organisations of women's defence and promotion, the stake in creating the new entity is very important. They thus intend to strongly involve themselves as partners whose expertise will be indispensable in formulating policies.

Also conscious of the essential role these civil society organisations can play in implementing UN-Women's ambitions, Mrs. Bachelet, as first manager of this institution, initiated a large consultation the recommendations of which inspired the formulation of both its priorities for the first one hundred days and beyond, the five priority themes.

A video film entitled "What does UN-Women mean for me?" sums up women's vision of Civil Society for UN-Women. People from all horizons and regions in the world speak of the future they are dreaming of for UN-Women and the type of future world they intend for women and girls all around the planet.

UN-WOMEN: A NEW HOPE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN?

Are African women's interests taken into account?

"Africa occupies an important place in the structuring of UN-Women and African women and girls are partners because the vision of UN-Women is a world in which men and women enjoy equal opportunities and skills, and the principles of gender equality are integrated to development, peace and security programmes" said Mrs. Michelle Bachelet during a meeting with Woman Ministers of the African Union in New York in the framework of the 55th UN session on the Women Status.

The objective of the meeting was to recapitulate the implementation of the action plan of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020.



Already in January 2011, the Executive Director of the UN agency met the African women during the African Union session. On 8th March, Africa and most particularly Liberia welcomed the celebration of the international women's day. It was the opportunity for Mrs. Bachelet to notice some African realities on the field.

Moreover, a series of regional and national consultations are planned with African women in order to collect their specific concerns and to draft a subsequent agenda. Let us remark that UN-Women is represented in all African sub regions.

RESSOURCES

Advocacy toolbox

This toolbox is based on materials developed for ILC project in Eastern and Southern Africa from 2007-2010 entitled "Securing Women's Access to Land: Linking Research and Action". The core of this project was action-oriented research carried out by partners in seven countries with a view to using research results in advocacy. The capacity-building activities to support partners included advocacy workshops on which this toolbox is based. This toolbox is split into two sections: one on advocacy planning, and one on tools. In an attempt to facilitate advocacy for small organizations with limited funds, using this toolbox does not require financial resources, but rather, focuses on sensitizing the media and lobbying. You can download the toolbox individually as a whole or in separate documents.

The Toolbox is available in English, French and Spanish. <http://www.landcoalition.org/global-initiatives/womens-access-land/advocacy-toolbox>

A New Resource: UN WomenWatch

WomenWatch, center of UN resources dedicated to gender, offers a range of resources on the importance of taking gender into account in negotiations on climate change issues and the key declarations and resolutions adopted by the United Nations member-states. This website available mostly in English, offers a range of documentation on gender issues and environment.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

Gender and socio-economic dynamics in Africa

This book is part of the Gender series initiated by CODESRIA, since the first Symposium on Gender in Cairo in 2002. It is part of the various activities and publications on these issues aiming to "capture the essence of current debates and expanding the African contribution to discussions on gender issues, feminism and society in general, as indicated in the introductory note in the series. The discussions cover a wide spectrum of topics related to women and social relations between sexes, and express a variety of opinions, evidence of a greater freedom of expression of the speaker.

<http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article579&lang=en>

NETWORK NEWS

WILDAF CSW at 55: Ensure the inclusion of the concerns of African women

WILDAF's participation in the 55th session, held from February 22nd to March 4th in New York, was the opportunity for the network to bring its modest contribution to debates on the official session theme namely **"Women and girls' access to education, training, science and technology particularly for the promotion of the equal access to full time employment and decent labour"**. WILDAF's participation was marked by two panels it organized.

The first panel was devoted to **"women farmers' participation in science and technology as a way for guaranteeing economic development in Sub Saharan Africa"**. The objective of this panel was to assess women farmers' needs in the fields of science and technology in terms of access, participation and monitoring for a better participation in the development of African countries' economies essentially based on agriculture". It was held on February 25th and was principally conducted by two women farmers who first tackled the issue of women's lack of access to education and technology, its impact on their daily lives and on their agricultural activities. The second part was devoted to sharing the alternatives they use to gap the difficulties they encounter because of the lack of access to science and technology.



The second panel, the theme of which is "The legal education on women's rights in West Africa, results and perspectives" was organised on March 1st. Its objective was to assess the way covered and the accomplished progress in terms of legal education, to take account of the persisting difficulties, to plan strategies that can be implemented in the future through sharing experiences and the best practices.



Picture of participants

Three presentations were made from the experiences of three countries namely Ghana, Mali and Togo. The third activity consisted in disseminating the **WILDAF Declaration** on West-African women's concerns regarding the official theme.

Furthermore, the presence of the delegation in New York was the opportunity for meeting the "American Jewish World Service (AJWS)" team. AJWS is a financial partner that has been giving an institutional support to WILDAF-WA since 2010.



K. Adjagbo-Johnson & Ruth Messinger, President of AJWS

WILDAF received in the framework of its project "using law for rural women's empowerment in West Africa" a delegation from MDG3 Fund. The meeting was held in Accra in Ghana and has allowed the Mission team to assess the implementation of the project in the field through the visit to the beneficiary communities as well as actors such as traditional leaders.

MDG3 Fund / Investing in equality is a fund set up by the Dutch Government in order to enable projects aiming at reducing gender inequalities to have adequate funding for their implementation. Started in January 2009 for a period of 30 months with a budget of 70 million Euros, the fund currently has 45 organizations around the world including WILDAF-West Africa. The recipient organizations were selected following a call for proposals.

We also learned that the Fund was able to mobilize additional funds of 15 million Euros, which will be used to extend the project for a period of six months.



NETWORK NEWS

WILDAF at 17th session of GIMAC / Gender is My Agenda

Prior to the 16th session of the African Union Heads of States Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme "Towards Unity and Integration through shared values," women of the African civil society regrouped in "Gender is My Agenda / GIMAC" among which WILDAF, organized a consultative meeting on gender mainstreaming within the African Union. The meeting targeted objective was to discuss three main themes included in the **United Nations Resolution 1325** regarding the Protection, Prevention and Participation of women in peace processes. They also took the opportunity to specifically contribute to the conflict settlement in Cote d'Ivoire.

Participants were asked to express their concerns through a series of recommendations, which were presented to the AU Heads of States Summit. These include:

- Encourage the elimination of violence against women, gender and social economy and gender mitigation and adaptation with regards to the effects of climate change as Shared Values;
- Ensure the inclusion of at least 50 percent women in all peace processes, and promote their effective participation and leading role in mediation teams. Gender sensitive trainings for mediators should be organized to better address gender related issues;
- Provide protection for the women peace activists especially in conflict and post conflict countries;
- Further urge those that have ratified to speed up domestication and implementation; taking into consideration that reporting guidelines have been adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights and to submit their reports accordingly.



Ownership of the African Women's Decade

The WILDAF network is getting organised for owning the objectives of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020 which was launched in October in Nairobi (Kenya). The African Women's Decade was initiated and proclaimed on the African Union Executive Council's recommendation following a certain number of notices related to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. In that purpose, it aims at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment from the basis up to the national, regional and continental levels by encouraging States to accelerate the implementation of commitments taken through various national, regional and international instruments.

WILDAF believes that the Decade objective can only be attained if the populations understand and own its ideals and involve themselves in them. In that purpose, the sub regional office of WILDAF-West Africa initiated, in January 2011, a brochure entitled "African Women's Decade: way forward to effective gender equality and women's empowerment". It aims at informing and sensitising a variety of actors among which populations, civil society organisations, political decision makers namely governments, locally and nationally elected people; traditional and religious authorities, opinion leaders as well as development partners. Concretely, the brochure gives information on the *raison d'être* of the Decade, actions planned, possible advantages for women and countries' development, the decade implications in terms of responsibility for the different actors, etc.



Download this booklet at: www.wildaf-ao.org/eng

The dissemination of this brochure is being carried out on the basis of a strategy conceived in the framework of an action "Taking the opportunity of the African women's decade to contribute to a new and more significant progress in women's priority fields". In the framework of implementing this action, WILDAF-Togo and WILDAF-Mali organised information meetings for their members and partners.

NETWORK NEWS

Continued from page 6

For **WILDAF-Togo**, the meeting took place on 1st March and enabled participants to define their expectations in the decade and to elaborate implementation strategies for successful project activities. The meeting decided that WILDAF-Togo should seize the opportunity of the Decade for strengthening its advocacy activities in favour of gratuitous caesarean in Togo. According to Mrs. Claire Quenum, President of the national network, "*Africa remains poor because woman's health is not taken into account in the States' policies and programmes*". WILDAF also has to restart the advocacy for the ratification of the optional Protocol to CEDAW, to work for more involving rural women in the decade actions and fight against illiteracy.



Picture of participants of the meeting in Togo

In Mali, the meeting occurred on 2nd and 3rd March 2011 and took the form of a national conference that gathered about sixty participants from Bamako, Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso. The first day was devoted to the analysis of the stakes of the women's decade and the advocacy document drafted by the WILDAF Sub Regional Office. The second day dealt with the review of the constitutional reform project: "**which stakes for women and the national Gender Policy?**"

The meeting resulted in recommendations formulated in five points, namely:

- Asking the Minister of the Promotion of Women, Children and Family to take the necessary provisions for setting up a national committee for implementing the women's decade and ensuring that this committee is operational;
- Getting informed on the national mother and infant mortality as well as on the roadmap of the implementation of the MDG objective 3 in Mali;
- Reinforcing the advocacy on the People and Family Code Project;
- Advocating for the gratuity of screening and taking in charge the cervix and breast cancers;
- Setting up a working group to draft provisions in favour of gender equality for the constitutional reform;
- Setting up an efficient pressure group to push the government into materialising their commitments.

The partner organisations, present at the meeting, appointed WILDAF-Mali as the spokes organ of the feminine civil society for the implementation of the women's decade in Mali.



Picture of participants of the meeting in Mali

Ghana: High Level Meeting with Political Parties on gender equality

WILDAF-Ghana and its partners organized yesterday (30th March 2011) at the Regency Coconut Grove Hotel, Accra a high level meeting with political parties on the theme: "**Political Parties' Commitment to Gender Equality: How far have we come since Women's Dialogue with Presidential Candidates in 2008?**"

This meeting was held in the framework of the project "We know Politics". This High Level Meeting with Political Parties aimed to assess commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment particularly in five thematic areas of Education, Health, Agriculture, Women's Enterprise and governance including policies and affirmative action at the party level or nationally.

Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF Ghana) and partners - Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Ghana), and The Hunger Project - Ghana, have been implementing the '**We Know Politics**' Project since 2008. The purpose of the '**We Know Politics**' Project is to create space for women's interaction with governance mechanisms to push women's concerns onto the political agenda of government and political parties. Such interactions will trigger timely and targeted actions to eliminate discrimination against women in political governance.

The project is currently under its second phase and is being implemented since June 2010 and will end in May 2013.

Let us recall that the first Phase of the '**We Know Politics**' project was implemented between 2008 and 2009. Many of the activities under Phase I centred on the 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

One outstanding activity was the premier **Women's Dialogue with Presidential Candidates in November 2008**. Five political parties namely the CPP, DFP, NDC, NPP and PNC participated in this 2008 Dialogue. These five political parties committed to implement some gender and women-centred policies and measures at both party and national levels.

The partners of the Project believe that **elections campaign promises should not be mere rhetoric. Therefore mid-point since the last presidential elections, this High Level Meeting with Political Parties has been organized**. It is expected that through this meeting, political parties will outline their plans for gender equality and women's empowerment for inclusion in party manifestos preceding elections in December 2012. The meeting has also been a springboard for the second Women's Dialogue with Presidential Candidates in 2012.

WiLDAF-Benin at the head of a group of civil society organizations has been given a small grant from "Maison de la Société Civile" to support advocacy activities for the strengthening of the legal framework for rural women access to land.

Specifically, this grant will help the community to take action against national institutions working on this issue so that they take a new decree repealing the decree on the composition of the structures of Land Management currently too unbalanced regarding the representation of women. Another decree should also be taken in to explain the terms of operationalizing the principle of the equal access to land for all Benin citizens.

In the framework of the implementation of its project « *using law for rural women's empowerment in West-Africa* », **WiLDAF sub regional** office plans to organize in May a series of national exchange meetings in the five beneficiary countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo.

These exchange meetings will help to hold the sub-regional meeting, which is expected in June in Lomé.

The national exchange meetings will give opportunity to the actors and beneficiaries to discuss and share best practices and experiences in the field. We will come back on this news in our next Issue.

49th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights

The **African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights** will hold its 49th session from **28th April to 12th May 2011** in **Banjul, the Gambia**.

In accordance with Article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, States Parties to the Charter are required to submit every two years, a report on the legislative or other measures taken, with a view to giving effect to the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed by the Charter.

Burkina Faso and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya are the countries that will present their reports during this session.

The reports can be downloaded on the Commission's website at: http://www.achpr.org/english/info/news_en.html

The AWID International Forum

The International Forum on Women's Rights and Development is the largest recurring event of its kind, bringing together women's rights leaders, donor agencies, development practitioners, grassroots leaders and activists from around the world. Held every three to four years, the Forum gives participants an opportunity to network, build alliances, celebrate, and learn in a highly charged atmosphere that fosters deep discussions and sustained personal and professional growth.

For AWID, the Forum responds to the urgency to promote stronger and more coordinated engagement and action by women's rights advocates, organizations and movements. We also believe that the Forum has the potential to set agendas for women's rights movements and organizations on key issues, identifying concrete initiatives they can engage with.

Since the first Forum was held in 1983 in Washington DC, AWID has organized 11 such events around the world, with a steadily growing number of participants. Close to 2000 activists came to the last Forum 'The Power of Movements' in Cape Town, South Africa in 2008.

AWID's next International Forum will take place in **Istanbul, Turkey in 2012**

<http://awid.org/eng/Our-Initiatives/The-AWID-International-Forum>

AFRICA NEWS

Tunisia: FIDH welcomes gender parity on electoral rolls in Tunisia

The International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) on Wednesday described as a 'first in the Arab world and elsewhere' the decision enshrining gender parity on the electoral rolls in Tunisia.

The body, which is overseeing the preparation of the election into the Tunisian Constituent Assembly scheduled for 24 July, overwhelmingly voted for parity on electoral lists on Monday. The decision provides for parity to be respected in all lists, with male and female candidates listed alternately. It also provides for the invalidation of the list if parity was not achieved 'Tunisia has demonstrated by this vote that there is no democracy without equality.

We must now go through and remove all reservations to the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,' FIDH said in a statement made available to PANA in Paris.

<http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/tunisia-fidh-welcomes-gender-parity-on-electoral-rolls-in-tunisia-201104148772.html>

The International Telecommunication Union launches training on the new technologies of information and communication

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) signed last a partnership with the nongovernmental organisation Foundation telecentre.org, based in Philippines and specialised in digital education, in order to offer training on the new technologies of information and communication (TIC) to one million unskilled women during the 18 coming months.

Baptised "Digital Literacy Campaign", the initiative aims at exploiting the Foundation's networks that account for 100,000 telelearning centres throughout the world and ITU's in its 192 member states, for offering trainings on the use of TICs.

Organised on the model "training of trainers", the campaign will offer courses in about 20,000 telelearning centres around the world up to end 2012. Every time, about fifty women will be trained and they will be able, in turn, to transmit their knowledge to about one million women.

"We hope that this joint campaign with Foundation telecentre.org will have an enormous impact on the improvement of women's conditions and on their livelihood, wherever they live and whatever their situations", declared Mr. Hamadoun Touré, ITU General Secretary, in a communiqué announcing the launching of the campaign.

"The offer of the digital skills to more than one million women will contribute to reverse the paradigm according to which, in many countries, the new technologies, first and before all, benefit men", Mr. Basheerhamad Schedrac, the Fondation telecentre.org Director proposed in his turn.

"Once trained in the telelearning centres, these women will be able to take profit from the power of technology; they will be able to help their communities in acceding to specific information, to knowledge, to new professional career opportunities; they will be able to improve their skills, and mainly to participate in the modern era of digital knowledge, not only as consumers but also as active knowledge producers" he added.

<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201104120853.html>

Henriette Ekwe received International Women of Courage Award

The journalist Henriette Ekwe, Publisher of *Bebela*, received the international **Women of Courage Award** from U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on March 8 in Washington, D.C. Ekwe is one of ten women around the world who has been selected by the U.S. Department of State to receive this award in 2011. She was nominated by the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde and has been honored at a high profile awards ceremony hosted by Secretary Clinton and First Lady Michelle Obama in Washington, D.C. on International Women's Day (March 8).



In announcing the award, U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon, Robert P. Jackson, stated: "*Henriette was selected because of her sustained and exceptional courage, commitment, and leadership in promoting democracy, transparency, human rights, and the rule of law in Cameroon. She is a living testimony of the courage of women around the world who are fighting for social justice and political freedom.*"

Cameroon should be proud of her, and we hope this award will inspire Cameroonians to participate actively in the continued development of democracy in Cameroon.

Continued on page 10

AFRICA NEWS

Continued from page 9

This is the first time a Cameroonian nominee has been selected for this prestigious award. Mrs. Ekwe is also the only honoree in 2011 from the African continent. The other award winners are from China, Belarus, Hungary, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, and Cuba.

Started in 2007 by then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary's International Women of Courage awards have honored women each year from around the world who have demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership in advocating for human rights, social justice, and women's equality and advancement. For the past four years, the U.S. has recognized women who have risked their lives and well-being to stop human trafficking, gender based violence, child marriage and corruption, as well as those who have been imprisoned, tortured, and threatened for standing up for justice, human rights, constitutional reforms, and the rule of law.

<http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=13449&rub=11:1>

Appointment of a female Prime Minister in Mali



The Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure has appointed a woman, **Cissé Mariam Sidibe Kaidama**, as Prime Minister, a first

in the history of Mali, according to a presidential decree released on April 3, 2011. Former minister, former international civil servant, Ms. Sidibé is aged about sixty years.

To date, only about fifty women around the world have been elected or appointed President or Prime Minister, with electoral legitimacy, according to an article published on www.artslivres.com.

In Africa, before Mali, Central Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Mozambique and Liberia have had a woman prime minister or president.

IPU calls for political reform in Mideast and North Africa

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has called on countries in the Middle East and North Africa to step up political reform, declared IPU Secretary General Anders B. Johnson.

"It is a resolution proposed by many parliaments which include Indonesia, New Zealand, Iran and Venezuela," Johnson told a press conference at the end of the assembly held in Panama City. Indonesia, New Zealand and Iran submitted one proposal to defend the rights of the people in the Middle East and North Africa, and Venezuela also presented one. The two were then unified into one single initiative which gained wide support among delegates, Johnson said. "We recognize that this process has to be led by the people themselves; for example the Egyptian people have all the rights, with the support of the international community, to decide for themselves their destiny. That is valid for all the countries," he said.

"We have the obligation to support them because our organization has experience in the topic and in fact we are already in the process of doing this," Johnson said. He said the IPU also urged Middle East parliaments to significantly expand women's participation in politics. On Libya, the IPU urged the international community to respect the right to self-determination of the people, he added.

The union also approved a motion to come to the aid of Japan, urging the international community to provide economic and humanitarian support to victims of the earthquake and tsunami that wrecked havoc on the Asian country last month.

The 124th IPU Assembly, held on April 15-20, has brought together representatives from 125 countries.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the IPU was established in 1889. It is the oldest multilateral political organization in the world, and currently has 155 members.

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90856/7357429.html>

WORLD NEWS

Gender equality in parliaments

Despite an increase in the number of women in parliaments, the aim of having parity between men and women in politics is still far off in many countries, said the **Interparliamentary Union (IPU)** in a report.

By the end of 2010, nearly **19.1 per cent** of parliamentarians worldwide were women, a rate never seen before, the study said. "This is a modest but significant: the proportion was **13.1% in 2000 and 16.3 % in 2005,**" said the IPU. In 2010, they are now 43 rooms in the world to have at least 30% of women. Three renovated rooms have surpassed the 40%, bringing to 11 the number of rooms with 40% women.

Five of the rooms have not renewed in 2010, however, no woman. The report stresses that the media coverage given to women continued to be lower than that given to men. Thanks in part to quotas, the average representation of women in the Arab States continues to rise but remain low by the IPU in 1995, 4.3%, 9.5 % in 2009 and 11.7 % in 2010.

Unsurprisingly, the countries of northern Europe have maintained a relatively high proportion of women in lower houses: 39.3 % in Belgium, 40.7 per cent in the Netherlands and 45.0 per cent in Sweden. In the Americas, where 15 rooms were to be renewed, the average has increased slightly. Three more women were elected head of state. Costa Rica has maintained its high level of women in parliament with 38.6 per cent. Founded in 1889 and based in Geneva (Switzerland), the IPU is the oldest multilateral political organization, and brings together 155 national parliaments and nine associated regional assemblies.

<http://levif.nnews.be/fr/news/belga-politique/parlements-avancee-moderate-mais-significative-dans-la-parite-hommes-femmes/article-1194964044531.htm>

Women, health and ICT

The **Millennia2015 WeHealth IWG** is committed to conduct an in depth research at the convergence of three main areas: Women, Health and ICTs. This is a unique area of work where scarcely no research has already been conducted.

The methodology of this research is based on:

- (a) Information collection,
- (b) Data analysis along the Millennium2015 variables,
- (c) Development of the first report on "Women and Health Global Baseline",
- (d) Action Plans to support women using ICTs for health and contribute to the achievement of MDGs 4 & 5 by 2015.

The **Millennia2015 WeHealth** Scientific and Methodological Committees ensure that the quality of the analysis and results are based on robust scientific processes. They have contributed to the development of a series of presentations and guides posted below to support the IWG members, the Millennium2015 Community and partners to participate to the research process in their countries.

For more information on this guide, please visit:

<http://www.millennia2015.org/page.asp?id=752&langue=EN>

Rural Development: IFAD is committed to equality

In a report published in early February 2011, the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** recognizes that gender equality is far from being achieved in rural development. The organization plans yet to play a key role in improving gender equality and women's empowerment with three objectives: to broaden women's access to finance, strengthen their role in decision-making and ease their workloads by facilitating access to basic services and rural infrastructure.

The report also stresses the importance of ensuring an in-house gender balance in the necessary personnel and in the allocation of financial resources.

For more information, download the report at:

<http://www.ifad.org/rpr2011/index.htm>

Austria: gender quotas adopted

The Austrian government has decided on 15th March 2011 to establish a quota system for women in the administration of public enterprises. According to the draft law, which should be passed by Parliament, the boards of public companies must have at least 25% of women by 2013, 35% by 2018.

This decision is based initially on the goodwill of the companies concerned. Possible sanctions are provided only for failure to respect the quota by 2018. The law covers 55 companies, 44 are fully owned by the Austrian state. Private companies are not affected. "*This is a cultural change. That will push for women in private enterprises*", said Minister of Economy Mitterlehner Reinhold.

Continued on page 12

WORLD NEWS

In Austria 27% of women held decision-making positions in 2009 in public services and the number of women in private companies were established at 87% according to statistics from the Ministry of Women.

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2011/03/15/97002-20110315FILWWW00500-autriche-quota-de-femmes-adopte.php>

The European Parliament votes in a new policy framework to protect women from violence

A new policy framework to fight violence against women was adopted by the European Parliament on April 5. The report proposing the framework, which was drafted by Member of the European Parliament Eva-Britt Svensson, and its adoption were hailed by women's organizations as a "welcome vote".

"The report is a very strong political document which highlights the need for an EU action against all forms of violence against women, including prostitution," said the **European Women's Lobby** in a press release following the announcement. "We welcome this vote as it demonstrates the common concerns of the members of the European Parliament to combat this pervasive human rights violation," added the EWL.

According to the adopted report rape and other forms of sexual violence against women should be classified as crimes in all EU countries, leading to automatic prosecution. The MEPs also call for an EU directive to combat gender-based violence.

The resolution states that Europe's women do not have equal protection against male violence across the EU, as national laws and policies differ from one Member State to another. All Member States should recognize rape and sexual violence against women as crimes, including within marriage and intimate informal relationships, contends Parliament. Member States should also ensure that such offences result in automatic prosecution. Any reference to cultural traditional or religious practices as a mitigating factor, including so-called "crimes of honor" and female genital mutilation must be rejected.

<http://www.filomenainrete.com/?p=1225>

Electronic bracelet to fight against domestic violence in France by 2012

The fight against gender-based violence remains a national priority since 2010. Therefore, the French minister of Solidarity, Mrs. Roselyne Bachelot who presented on 14 April 2011 an action plan dedicated to women victims of violence, declared that more than 31 million Euros will be devoted to that policy between 2011 and 2013, this represents 30% rise compared to the three past years.

In 2009, 650,000 sexual abuse cases either in marriage or elsewhere were registered and 140 women died from domestic violence. This third action plan aims at protecting women victims of this plague.

19 million Euros will be devoted to new measures aiming at protecting women and children. There will be assistance for victims in every department by 2013.



Picture of the bracelet

Roselyne Bachelot announced also that thirty electronic bracelet will be tested by 2012 on perpetrators of serious domestic violence. This was planned for 2010, but this measure introduced by the Ministry of Justice seeks to hold off the abuser of the victim.

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2011/04/13/01016-20110413ARTFIG00666-violences-conjugales-test-du-bracelet-electronique-en-2012.php>

WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter

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