

WILDAF WEST AFRICA

Newsletter

Women in Law and Development in Africa

Issue 40 October 2009

EDITORIAL

Women's participation in decision-making is a fundamental right recognized by international instruments on human and women's rights. At regional level, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa required an equal participation of men and women in politics.

Can it be otherwise since African countries have made an irreversible choice to build democratic societies? But where are we exactly? It is a question worth asking, while we are on the eve of Beijing +15 and we are preparing to celebrate the 30 years of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women.

The current issue of WILDAF West Africa Newsletter will once again focus on women's participation in decision-making and more particularly on their representation in public structures. In this 40th issue of our newsletter, we will share with our readers the experience of some African countries in adopting and implementing incentives measures for a greater participation of women in decision-making.

As usual we have compiled for you the news of the network and some relevant information regarding women's rights promotion in Africa and worldwide without forgetting the upcoming events and publications.

Enjoy your reading and thank you for your faithfulness.

Kafui Adjamagbo-Johnson

WILDAF-West Africa Coordinator

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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:

November 1st, 2009

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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS: EXPERIENCE OF SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The equal participation of men and women in decision making is recognized today as a fundamental right for African women. Some of the causes explain the important difference existing between women and men's participation in decision making. But because of the stakes of participation, States committed themselves, through many platforms among which those of Cairo in 1994, of Dakar in 1994 (the 5th African Regional Conference) and of Beijing (in 1995), and legal instruments such as the Convention on Women's political rights in 1952, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights related to women's rights in Africa, to:

1- undertake specific positive actions to promote the participative governance and equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through an affirmative action and a national legislation and other measures that can guarantee that:

- Women participate in every election without any discrimination;
- Women are equally represented with men and at all levels in electoral processes;
- Women are equal partners of men at all levels of designing and implementing national policies and programmes.

2- States insure an increased, significant and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision making. (Article 9 of Protocol to the ACHPR related to women's rights in Africa).

In accordance with this commitment, many States have adopted measures likely to favour women's participation in decision making. (I) Generally, one question raised by the adoption of these measures is the question of their real effectiveness.

Measures adopted by States to promote women's participation in decision making

These measures generally consist in adopting quotas matched with sanctions or incentive measures.

The quota as a measure to ensure women's participation in decision making

The African Union countries have committed themselves to the men-women parity in decision making. This parity has become a reality in the organs of the African Union. So, the African Union Commission composed of 10 members accounts for 5 women and 5 men Commissioners. Through the Solemn Declaration on gender equality in Africa adopted in 2004, the Heads of States reaffirmed their commitment to parity and committed themselves to extend it in their countries at all levels of decision making including local level.

It is clear that the quota system can only be transitory to help countries move toward parity which is the standard.

The quota system, as a response to the weak representation of women in politics, places the responsibility of women's access to decision-making positions not on women as individuals, but on those who control the process of recruiting in the political decision making organs. The mechanism consists in imposing a minimum number of women in the political decision making organs. In Africa, many countries have succeeded in integrating the quota in their constitutions or in their electoral codes, while in other countries, political parties have decided to integrate the quota into their statutes. For example, in Mozambique, the Mozambican Liberation Front has adopted a 30% quota for women.

Countries that have entered the quota into their constitutions or their electoral codes

As of today, at least 22 countries have entered the quota into their constitutions or their electoral laws for women's representation in national or local parliaments. These countries are: South Africa, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Uganda, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Tanzania.

Six of these countries (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Somalia) have a constitutional quota system. Instead of amending their constitutions, the other countries have revised their electoral laws and their laws related to political parties. Seven among countries who have adopted the quota, namely Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone, are in West Africa.

It is interesting to remark that among the countries who have adopted the quota system, the provisions instituting the quota do not exclusively aim at women. They indistinctly apply to men and women with the idea of ensuring a minimum representation of one or the other sex. Thus, in Niger, the law of 7 June 2000 obliges political parties in electoral context to concede 10% of the seats to either sex weakly represented. In Burkina Faso, one can also read in article 1 of the law "the Present law sets a quota in favour of one sex or the other in legislative and local elections in Burkina Faso."

On the contrary, these provisions explicitly aim at women. In Mauritania, article 1 of the ordinance bearing organic statute related to promoting women's access to electoral warrant and elective functions states: "in the framework of implementing the principle of equal access to electoral warrants and to elective functions and in respect of the principle of equality of the vote, both fundamental rights guaranteed by the State, the present ordinance aims at promoting the access of women to electoral warrants and to elective functions at the levels of national parliaments and town councils".

Quotas are sometimes imposed for appointments: in Niger, the quota in favour of one or the other sex is 25% at least for appointments to higher functions.

The instituted quota varies according to countries, some countries sometimes choosing to make complex combinations. In Niger, the quota is 10% for elective positions and 25% for appointments. In Burkina Faso, the quota demanded for the lists of candidates from political parties is at least 30% for either sex.

In Rwanda where the system is more complex, the State commits itself, in the article 9 of the Constitution, to allow at least 30% of positions

to women in the decision making organs, and article 82 of the same constitution stipulates that the Senate is composed of at least 30% of female members. Moreover, 24 seats are reserved to women in the National Assembly. Furthermore, women are entitled to be candidates for non reserved seats.

In that matter, one has to consider that a critical minority of 30% is necessary, if women represented in the decision making organs are envisaged to have a significant influence. This explains why this quota exists in many action platforms as the one of Beijing.

Mali identifies itself in the group of those who have adopted the quota by the fact that the quota of 5% for women set for legislative and communal elections is not compulsory.

Countries whose political parties have willingly adopted a quota

In an important number of countries and sometimes in the absence of constitutional or legislative initiatives, political parties have willingly imposed on themselves a quota system for women's representation in elective positions. These measures are written in their statutes or taken when preparing elections. In Africa these voluntary measures are taken in at least 18 countries: South Africa, Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. It has been observed that in many cases, these quotas are first applied by parties that want to promote equality, then others just follow the example. Some parties have even chosen a quota of 50%.

The sanction of compulsory quotas

The quotas are generally sanctioned legally. The sanction of the non respect of a quota for women or candidates of one sex or the other on electoral lists is for the electoral list to be rejected by the electoral Committee.

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The non respect of the quota by a party list makes the list ineligible. The risk for parties to find themselves excluded from elections is likely to dissuade them from going against the law.

Instead of instituting a quota, some countries have chosen the fact of planning incentive measures.

Incentive measures

These incentive measures aim at bringing political parties into adhering by themselves to the need of ensuring a minimum representation of women or one or the other sex.

In Cape Verde, the 1999 electoral code plans financial advantages for parties having 30% of women in eligible position on their lists for legislative elections.

In Mali, to encourage political parties into conforming to the non compulsory 5% quota, article 29 of the Charter of Political Parties allocates 10% of the total amount of the financial aid granted to political parties to those parties that will obtain 5% of women elected members of parliament and 5% of women elected councillors.

In Togo, no quota is imposed but a step had been taken as incentive measure for the legislative elections in 2007. Through the law 2007-018 and more precisely in its article 9, the State allocates to political parties a bonus proportional to the number of women elected members of Parliament and women local councillors. Moreover, the Decree 2007-073 setting the amount for backing the anticipated legislative elections allows a 25% reduction on women candidates' deposit.

What is the effectiveness of these measures?

The effectiveness of quotas

The essence of women electoral quotas consists in obliging parties and other selecting organs to recruit candidates among women who traditionally also excel in the role of electors rather than women electors. In that purpose, the systems have been partly efficient in many countries.

A proved effectiveness in many countries

In Rwanda, the introduction of a quota made it possible to have the greatest number of women members of parliament in the world:

after the first elections of 2003 following the reforms, the country accounted for 48% of women in the lower house and 30% in the Senate; this representation which already was a great success went up to 56% in the lower house and 34% in the Senate after the 2008 elections.

The enforcement of the law on quotas made it possible to observe a fulgurating entrance of women in town councils in the July 2004 elections in Niger. Over the 3747 seats available for all the 265 communes during the elections, women won 661, that is approximately 17%. The number of women elected to the National Assembly went up from 1 to 14 women representatives over a total of 113 MPs. The psychological impact of the laws on women appears in the following words by one of the new elected women "My candidacy was motivated by the law on quotas... Not to have their list rejected by the constitutional court, our party asked all the women members, having a certain level of instruction and capable of mobilising their fellows, to propose their names. With the support of the party and of some women organisations, I was not afraid of moving forward".

These results are certainly very encouraging; but in general, a few conditions should be put together for obtaining satisfactory results.

Conditions for an optimal quota effectiveness

Studies have shown that the quota system is easier to apply and more effective in proportional representation systems than in majority systems. According to the Interparliamentary Union, the average of women representation in the 21 countries using the majority electoral system amounts to 15.5% against 27.4% in the 12 countries applying the proportional representation.

Its effectiveness also depends on the women's positioning on electoral lists. The demand for a 40 or 50% quota may yield no result in terms of elected women. The fundamental question is "have these women been placed in positions enabling them to be elected?". Women's positioning in eligible places is even demanded in some laws as in article 3 of the law on local elections in Mauritania.

In addition, the success of a quota system depends on the rulers and party leaders.

Quotas are more effective in a favourable environment where populations are sensitised on the women's necessary participation in decision making, where incentive measures are sufficiently attractive and sanctions sufficiently dissuasive to bring parties to comply with the law or the constitution.

May they be imposed by the State through the constitution or electoral provisions or voluntarily applied by political parties, quotas are generally in both cases the result of the strong pressure exercised by women organisations and other forces favourable to the institution of gender equality in politics.

This mobilisation as well as all the thinking about the causes of women's under representation are very important elements that make quotas yield results. The pressure from the international community is important too, but the local organisations should participate in the process upstream and downstream to make long term results possible as regards women's participation.

In the countries, women organisations have proposed bills to vote, convinced political parties to adopt the quota system. According to countries, women have been able to seize opportunities given by the particular political contexts to have the desired reforms voted: the post-conflict reconstruction as in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but also opportunities for political dialogue and reforms following political agreements or simply the democratisation process.

But the pressure put on decision makers and party leaders has been accompanied with activities of sensitising women from both majority and opposition parties, the population at large, including those in the rural areas; of activities of training women candidates and of supporting their candidacies.

One of the challenges of the quota for women in politics is also to do whatever possible for women appointed or elected, thanks to the quota system, to be capable of carrying out the responsibilities awaiting them.

To avoid the quota being a trap that closes on women, capacity building activities should be undertaken in favour of those who reach positions of political responsibility.

Effectiveness of incentive measures

The comparison of results obtained in some countries that have adopted incentive measures with those who have chosen quotas show that incentive measures have not been so effective as the compulsory quotas.

In Togo, besides the little attractiveness of measures, the absence of quota and sanctions has not made their real effectiveness possible. There were more women candidates on party lists, but their positioning was not as favourable.

The number of women in parliament has increased from 5 to 9 over 81; we must regret that women representation only reached 11%.

In Mali, the non compulsory quota has had no impact in spite of the financial advantage for the political parties. The last elections in 2008 only brought a women representation rate of 10% in legislative and 6.5% in local elections.

To compare, the average of women's representation in African parliaments amounts to 17.3% in sub-Saharan Africa; the lowest representation rate is 5.2% in Chad and the highest 56.3% in Rwanda.

These non satisfactory results were obtained in Togo and Mali though the mobilisation of women organisations have sensitised the political party leaders, party women themselves and even women candidates were trained.

These experiences show that a voluntary policy that imposes compulsory quotas is a necessary condition. The incentive measures might come uniquely as complementary grants to those who have complied with the law.

NETWORK NEWS

WILDAF-West Africa office



WILDAF-West Africa participation in the CEO Leadership forum in Kampala

The African Women Development Fund (AWDF), a grant-making foundation for African women's organizations held a leadership forum, designed for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Executive Directors and Board members of regional and sub-regional women's organizations from 14-16 September 2009 in Kampala, Uganda.

The forum aimed at thinking and analysing the current leadership and management facing women's organizations and how a collective strategy can be developed to address this issue. It dealt with four main issues such as:

- Asset building
- Knowledge management
- Feminist movement without feminist
- Our personal and political relationship to leadership and management in women's organizations

The programme also included presentations and discussions of participating organisations, telling their organizations story since 1986 by emphasising on critical and important moments of this period.

One of the outcomes of this forum was the establishment of a CEO's forum of women's organizations operating at regional and sub-regional levels that seek to address current challenges of leadership management within women's organizations.

National Networks

Capacity building workshop for WILDAF-Senegal and WILDAF-Togo members

WILDAF-Senegal organised from 3rd to 6th August 2009 a workshop on the capacity building for the network's members. The workshop financed by the West-Africa Sub-regional office, was held under the theme "**organizational development and networking**". The four-day workshop enabled the participants to consolidate advocacy / lobbying activities which "Women and good governance" coalitions have already begun at decentralized level. They also discussed strategic planning, project development and fund raising issues. The work ended by the general assembly during which **Ms Mariam Coulibaly** was elected president of WILDAF Senegal.



On the right, Ms Mariame Coulibaly making a presentation

Regarding WILDAF-Togo, the network held its capacity building workshop under the same theme "**Organizational Development and Networking**" from 29th September to 2nd October 2009 in Lome. It brought together members of the network from grassroots organizations and "Women and Good Governance" decentralized coalitions. This workshop helped to revitalize and mobilize coalitions and the network members on advocacy actions and also to ensure the sustainability of the network's activities.

AFRICA NEWS

Madagascar: Women encouraged to denounce violent husbands

"I never had the courage to denounce my husband who constantly beat me whenever he starts drinking. The same thing happens almost every day since he lost his job because of the crisis", said Ramiandrisoa Juliette, a woman victim of physical violence of her husband.

This complaint is shared by many women victims of violence. This resignation may be explained by the Malgasy saying "tokanrano tsy ahahaka", which means "dirty linen or clothes are not washed in public".

However, centers and organizations fighting against domestic violence, have analysed this problem in a different way. "We want to encourage women to report violence perpetrated by their husbands . Neighbors are also encouraged to support women victims of violence in order to report these abuses " , declared Amina Ahmed, Program officer in charge of domestic violence prevention at Enda Indian Ocean.

Her appeal seems to satisfy the thirst of many women. *"We have indeed noted that domestic violence has intensified more than before, since January. Alcohol intake is one of the main causes of violence "* added Amina Ahmed.

<http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200909150460.html>

Imminent launch of the African Women Rights Observatory

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa/African Centre for Gender and Development (UNECA/ACGS) has launched, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme Regional Gender Program, Africa Bureau (UNDP/RGPA), the African Women Rights Observatory (AWRO). The launch took place on August 28, 2008 during the Ministerial session of the Conference of African Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The AWRO is dedicated to monitor the status of African women's rights in African countries and create a forum for knowledge and experience sharing among countries, institutions, partners and individuals who are involved in advocating for the advancement of African women's status and promoting their rights.

Celebration of the 10th edition of the programme "Girls , Science and Technology" in Mali

The programme "Girls, Science and Technology" of the Pathfinder Foundation organized a training workshop in Bamako, Mali. It brought together forty girls studying scientific courses in the ECOWAS countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Mali.

These girls have revealed themselves through a competitive examination by the remarkable marks they got during the school year.

This programme, which is in its 10th edition, aimed to encourage girls to get interested in scientific courses. The training helped them improve in Mathematics, Physics, Science, and Computer Science.

It is to remind that the Pathfinder Foundation is spearheaded by Dr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, an aerospace engineer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. He is currently Microsoft manager for Africa Region.

<http://www.afriqueavenir.org/2009/08/09/le-programme-%C2%AB-filles-et-sciences-%C2%BB-celebre-sa-10-eme-edition-au-mali/>

Mauritius: An action plan to end gender-based violence

Gender Links in partnership with the municipality of Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill in Mauritius organized a workshop from 15-16 September 2009 on the new action plan, which aimed at ending violence against women.

"During two days, we will develop an action plan for the authorities, police officers and the local community so that they can help them combat violence against women," said Mary Coopan, the spokesman of Genderlinks.

This action plan will be controlled by a monitoring committee which will work on the 16-day activism campaign against gender-based violence, which is scheduled for November 25 to December 10, 2009. The action plan will be submitted to councillors in order to be implemented.

In addition, local communities will think about projects and best practices to be presented at a summit on violence in which Mauritius is expected to participate. This summit will be held in March 2010 in South Africa.

AFRICA NEWS

Senegal: Rape of a minor - the penalty ranges from 10 to 15 years

Last December, a committee was established to better address and study cases of rape and violence against women in Senegal. Thus on 1 July 2009, legal experts met to deliver the report of that committee. During this ceremony, the Senegalese Minister of Justice announced that the 10-year imprisonment for rapists increased to 15 years.

The crime of rape will now be severely punished. The maximum penalty, which was until then 10 years, will increase to fifteen years, declared the Minister of Justice, Mr. Niang Madické. "We go up to 15 years. We've added five years. If we notice that it is not effective, we are going to criminalize the act of rape ", said Mr Madické Niang. Measures will also be taken in the Penal Code.

The chairman of the committee, Judge Demba Kandji and other experts, have agreed on the existence of a legislative framework to better protect women and children. Regarding the issue of medical certificate, it must be delivered by doctors chosen by the Appeal Court on a list proposed by the Board of Physicians.

Burundi working towards the realisation of the MDGs: additional quotas for women in recent voted electoral law

Women have been granted additional quotas in the newly revised electoral law, which was voted recently by the Burundian parliament thanks to women's organizations lobby. The Constitution and the recent electoral law, which were only securing at least **30% of women** in Parliament and government, are now considering the same quotas for women at **communal level**.

By this decision, Burundi is working towards the realisation of the Third Objective of the MDGs, which implies **gender equality and women's empowerment**. This step was made possible through a good partnership between women of the civil society organisations and women members of Parliament.

However, the suggestion to have 5 councillors at the cellular or collinal level has been rejected by the parliament, which find it to be unconstitutional and against the principle of direct universal suffrage to be applied at that level.

This is a best practice that all African Countries have to follow in order to increase women's political participation.

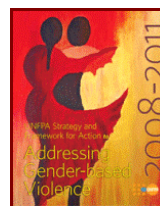
PUBLICATIONS

Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has released a *"Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change"*.

The publication responds to the needs of policy makers and climate change scientists to understand and address better the gender dimensions of climate change. It clarifies the linkages between gender and climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is a practical tool to increase the capacity of policy and decision makers to develop gender-responsive climate change policies and strategies.

<http://www.iucn.org/resources/publications/?3434/Training-Manual-on-Gender-and-Climate-Change>



Addressing Gender-based Violence: UNFPA Strategy and Framework for Action

This publication identifies priority areas for intensified action on gender-based violence: policy frameworks, data collection and analysis, focus on sexual and reproductive health, humanitarian responses, adolescents and youth, men and boys, faith-based networks, and vulnerable and marginalized populations.

It is intended to provide a common platform and technical guidance for UNFPA at country, regional and global levels and effectively guide capacity-development initiatives, resources and partnerships.

The strategy also outlines UNFPA's comparative advantages, experience and leadership potential within the context of United Nations reform, and suggests opportunities for improving the efficacy of its programme implementation and technical support.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/publications/pid/1565>

WORLD NEWS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: 2010 GINETTA SAGAN AWARD FOR WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The purpose of the Ginetta Sagan Fund of Amnesty International USA is to recognize and assist women who are working to protect the liberty and lives of women and children in areas where human rights violations are widespread. The 2010 award will be given to a woman who works on behalf of the human rights of children. Deadline for nominations.

The Ginetta Sagan Fund recognizes individual accomplishment, but also serves as a beacon of hope to women everywhere who are fighting for human rights.

The creation of the Ginetta Sagan Fund emphasizes that more human rights work must be done by and for women. The \$10,000 award is announced and presented each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Amnesty International USA. The 2010 AGM will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

For information, please visit www.amnestyusa.org/ginettasaganfund/

UN and partners open new front in war on sexual violence against girls

The United Nations joined with other partners launched a new initiative to fight against sexual violence on girls, a scourge which affects 150 million victims a year and contributes to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The programme seeks to provide funding to expand surveillance of sexual violence against girls in developing and emerging countries, develop a technical package of interventions for implementation at a country level to reduce the incidence of such abuse, and launch a major media campaign to motivate social and behavioural change.

"These three intervention strategies are pillars of what is expected to emerge as a global movement to address this devastating human injustice and public health problem," the partners said in a joint news release.

The initiative brings together five UN agencies: the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and private sector supporters via the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI).

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32252&Cr=violence+against+women&Cr1=>



New sub-section of the IPU website on taking action on violence against women

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) launched a new sub-section of its website dedicated to its campaign and programme of work to support parliaments in their efforts to end violence against women. Providing an overall picture of the strategy and the activities of the campaign, the sub-section also offer useful information and campaign material for men and women parliamentarians engaged in fighting one of the most widespread human rights violation and severe discrimination against women.

Moreover, parliaments are invited to use this space to present the initiatives they are taking to address this scourge and in particular the activities they are planning to hold to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November.

<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/vaw/overview.htm>

The United Nations adopted recently a new resolution to protect women against conflict-related sexual violence

The United Nations Security Council, chaired by the U.S. Secretary of State, **Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton** adopted unanimously on **September 30, 2009** the **resolution 1888** on women and peace and security. The new resolution mandates peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflicts.

This new resolution on women, peace and security, which goes within the framework of the implementation of the **Resolution 1820** adopted since 2008 on sexual violence during armed conflicts, outlines actions the United Nations and member states can take to prevent such a phenomenon.

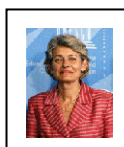
Resolution 1888 calls for new actions to be taken such as :

- The appointment of a special representative to lead efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence against women and children.
- The creation of a team of experts to help governments in preventing conflict-related sexual violence, strengthening civilian and military justice systems and enhancing aid to victims.

WORLD NEWS

- Reports by U.N. peacekeeping missions to the Security Council about the prevalence of sexual violence.
- Consideration by the U.N. Security Council of patterns of sexual violence during the process of adopting or targeting sanctions.
- The inclusion of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping operations where it is appropriate, as determined by the U.N. secretary-general.
- The submission of annual reports by the secretary-general on the implementation of this resolution as well as more systematic reporting on conflict-related sexual violence.

The adoption of the Resolution 1888 is a great step of the International Community towards the need to strengthen the fight against sexual violence during armed conflicts and fight against impunity.



A woman is elected for the first time in history at the head of UNESCO

The former Bulgarian Ambassador in France as well as with UNESCO, **Irina Bokova**, just made her entry in the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**, becoming the first woman elected to lead the institution.

She received 31 votes against 27 votes given to his adversary, the Egyptian Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni. The 58 members of the Executive Board of UNESCO has designated the Bulgarian diplomat, **Irina Bokova** as **Director General** of the Organization on **September 22, 2009**. Her appointment will be confirmed on **October 15, 2009** during the next General assembly of the 193-member states of the Organization.

This election confirms the commitment of the United Nations to promote more women in higher positions within the institution. Let us point out that the number of women in higher positions in the UN agencies increased by **40%** during the term of the current Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

WILDAF welcomes this choice, which is dedicated to women's promotion to higher positions. The network extends its congratulations to Ms. Irina Bokova and wishes her a fruitful mandate.



At last a new UN agency dedicated to women's rights!

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a late **September 14** a resolution on the creation of a new single entity within the Organization dedicated to women's rights and well-being worldwide and to gender equality.

The resolution means that four United Nations agencies and offices working on gender issues namely the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) will be merged.

The new agency will be headed by an under-secretary-general to deal with issues concerning women.

This decision comes from a sustained action of women of the civil society, through a global campaign launched at the 53rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which calls on the UN Secretary-General and the Member States of the General Assembly to establish a new agency to be entirely devoted to women.

The civil society's organizations and more particularly women's rights organisations welcome the UN Secretary General's action and urge him to quickly provide Member States with a comprehensive proposal detailing the mission, structure and funding of the new entity so that it can be operational as soon as possible.

Congratulations to the UN General Assembly and also to Mr. Ban Ki Moon for the creation of this new entity in order to better promote women's rights.



Consult the UN Secretary-General's database on violence against women at : <http://endviolence.un.org/>

EVENTS



World march for peace and non-violence

The *World March* will begin in New Zealand on **October 2, 2009**, the anniversary of Gandhi's birth, declared the "International Day of Nonviolence" by the United Nations. It will conclude in the Andes Mountains (Punta de Vacas, Aconcagua, Argentina) on **January 2, 2010**.

The March will last 90 days, three long months of travel. It will pass through all climates and seasons, from the hot summer of the tropics and the deserts, to the winter of Siberia. The American and Asian stages will be the longest, both almost a month. A permanent base of a hundred people of different nationalities will complete the journey.

<http://www.theworldmarch.org/index.php?secc=info>

World March of Women 2010: If all women are not free , we will still go on marching !

The third edition of the "World March of Women" is scheduled for **2010** under the theme "*If all women are not free , we will still go on marching !*". The 2010 edition of this march will focus on four themes namely: women's work, violence against women, peace and demilitarization and women's access to resources.

The World March of Women is a feminist initiative launched by the Federation des femmes du Quebec, which aims to fight against poverty and violence against women. The march will include the participation of 6 000 women's groups from 161 countries all over the world.

<http://www.millebords.org/spip.php?article12007>

46th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights will hold its 46th session from **11 to 25 November 2009 in Banjul, The Gambia**. The following initial and periodic states reports will be examined: *the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Madagascar*.

These reports focus mainly on the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the actions taken for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the measures taken for gender equality implementation in these countries .

For more information, please visit the website of the African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples at http://www.achpr.org/english/info/news_en.html

Forum on the participation of NGOs in the 46th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and 20th African Human Rights Book Fair

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) will host the Forum on the participation of NGOs in the **46th Ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights** from **7 to 9 November 2009 Banjul, Gambia**.

The meeting will focus on human rights situation in Africa in general and attempt to bring to the fore specific situations that need to be highlighted in order to attract the attention of the African Commission in particular and the international community and other concerned bodies. The Forum also aims to foster closer collaboration and cooperation between NGOs themselves and with the African Commission in order to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa, to provide a discussion platform for organizations working on democracy and human rights issues in the continent, and to promote inter-regional/organizational networking for the implementation of decisions of the Forum.

As usual, women's rights issues will be aroused and a particular attention will be given to the implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights on the rights of Women in Africa and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

The 20th African Book Fair is expected to be held alongside with this forum. The fair will enable NGOs to network and initiate or renew the exchange of documents and information and awareness activities.

<http://wildaf-ao.org/eng/spip.php?article1230>

The fifteenth-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action

The adoption of the Beijing Action Plan in 1995 has opened a new era for women's empowerment. This action plan calls on all governments to intensify their efforts to support gender inequality issues. Thus, the **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)** is preparing the **fifteenth-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in Africa**. The Regional evaluation meeting for African countries is expected from **16-20 November 2009 in Banjul, Gambia** while the Global review meeting is planned for **2010**.

During the evaluation meeting, 53 member states are requested to submit their reports regarding the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action.

The **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)** has thus sent a questionnaire to countries for the elaboration of reports and also to help them have a reliable database on women. WILDAF West Africa, which is actively involved in the preparation for Beijing + 15, also prepared a **questionnaire for NGOs** in order to help them submit a **shadow report** on the implementation of African women's human rights recognised in the Protocol to the African Charter on human and peoples' rights on the rights of women in Africa and in the Beijing platform of action in West African countries. Some terms of reference elaborated by WILDAF are also available for its focal points and national networks in order to enable them to participate in the evaluation process of Beijing + 15.

<http://wildaf-ao.org/eng/spip.php?article1260>

October 15, 2009: Rural Women's Day

The 2009 edition of the International Day of Rural Women will be celebrated under the theme "Rural women and innovations."

Each year, a global campaign for rural women's awareness and empowerment is launched in order to improve their image. Through this celebration, rural women will seek to develop and prove to the governments and the society in general the important role they play in the sustainable development and in food security.

The global campaign supports rural women's several actions, which are held everywhere. 20,000 posters and documents are distributed each year to various grassroots organizations and institutions worldwide.

For more information visit the WWSF website at: <http://www.woman.ch/june09/women/2-introduction.php>

Celebrating CEDAW and its Optional Protocol: 30 years improving women's rights

The seminar is organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and will take place on **22 October 2009** at **International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG)**. It primarily targets members of parliaments of those States parties to the Convention whose reports were considered by the CEDAW Committee during the course of 2009 and or will be considered at the beginning of 2010.

The seminar aims at taking stock of progress made in the field of gender equality 30 years after the coming into being of the Convention. Specific attention will be placed on violence against women and inequality in the labour market. The seminar also aims to identify opportunities for strengthening parliament's role both in the reporting process, including preparation and presentation of reports, and in follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on the reports. Several experts, including a member of the Committee, a member of the Committee's Secretariat and a member of parliament with experience in this field, will facilitate the seminar.

<http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/cedaw09.htm>

WILDAF WEST AFRICA Newsletter

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