

Press Release

For Immediate Release June 25, 2010

African Union Member States urged to support and adequately fund the African Women's Decade

Over 50 leaders working on women's empowerment and gender equality in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, convened in a three day meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania to deliberate on the outcome of the Beijing +15 review and strategize for the African Women's Decade (2010-2020).

The three day meeting organized by African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) brought together Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), women politicians, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and representatives from the African Union Commission, UN agencies namely UNECA, UNIFEM, UNFPA, and the Media.

Participants were deeply concerned that 15 years after the Beijing World Conference on Women, and 10 years since States committed to the Millennium Development Goals, scattered progress has been registered on issues around women and development. In terms of women's representation in decision-making, even though several countries in Eastern Africa have achieved the 30% target, other countries are still lagging behind and majority have not taken adequate steps to address the concerns articulated, relating to women and poverty, women and health, violence against women and girls, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, human rights of women, women and the environment and women and the media. Maternal mortality rates are unacceptably high, sexual violence against women is increasingly being used as a weapon of war, threatening women's personal security even in the confines of their homes. Trafficking of women and children is a growing phenomenon and business that requires concerted efforts if it is to be decisively curtailed.

Participants welcomed the decision by African Heads of States that declared **2010-2020 the African Women's Decade**, and for establishing an African Women's Fund. Participants urged the AU Member States to urgently and generously contribute to the African women's fund so that Gender machineries and civil society can utilize the resources to meet the goals of the African Women's Decade. The Decade, which will be launched in Kenya in October 2010, is intended to cascade, in concrete terms, the execution of commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment from the grass-roots, national, regional to continental levels.

Participants emphatically agreed that this time, *it should not be business as usual*. The African Women's Decade needs to bring about **transformative change** in the lives of African women, girls, and the community at-large. This will require high level commitment, prioritization and increased resources from African governments to ensure women's priorities, needs and concerns are adequately funded and progress closely monitored to address all possible hindrances.

What will African women celebrate in the year 2020?

Can African women boast of a better life in 2020?

Join us and use the opportunity of the African Women's Decade to achieve the much needed change!

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