

Statement from the 2010 Africa Feminist Forum on the UN Women

We, African women feminists, activists including young women leaders drawn from diverse women's rights organizations and networks operating in different countries, sub- regions and across the continent, meeting at the Third African Feminist Forum (AFF) held in Dakar, Senegal from the 21st – 24th of October 2010;

Considering and acknowledging the numerous achievements and progress made at different levels to strengthen the legal and policy frameworks and institutional arrangements for the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment commitments including among many others, the strengthening of the gender equality architecture within the United Nations by the formation of the UN Women;

Convinced that the establishment of the UN Women is a positive indicator of the political commitment of UN member states to step up and accelerate efforts aiming to achieve the full realization of women's rights in the pursuit of the goals of peace, equality and development for all;

Recognizing the significant role played by women's organizations and networks from developing countries in partnership with their sister organizations in Europe and North America in the process that led to the formation of the UN Women;

Taking cognizance of the high expectations women across the globe have of the new UN entity for women's empowerment and gender equality to respond better and appropriately to their diverse needs and aspirations to transform their lives and equally enjoy the benefits of development that the world has experienced in this information age;

Frustrated by the current neo-liberal macroeconomics models and frameworks of development that are obviously working against the interests of the majority poor in all regions of the world but most especially the poor people in Africa where currently the majority of the poor living on less than US D 1.25 are African women;

Determined that the voices of African women continue to be heard and their proposals acted upon by the United Nations in general and in particular by the UN Women as key stakeholders, partners and potential beneficiaries;

Call upon the UN Secretary – General and the leadership of the UN Women to:

- Ensure that the creation of the UN Women quickly translates into the urgently required resources (both human and financial) to make it possible for the new entity to begin delivering on its mandate in the shortest time possible.
- Consider the urgency of defining the mechanisms through which the UN Women will continue to engage and dialogue with different stakeholders including African women's rights organizations and networks to determine the scope of its work for the next five years;
- Prioritize assured support for actions highlighted in the NGO Forum 10-10-10 Communiqué and the Nairobi Declaration adopted at the continental Launch of the Africa Women's Decade held in Nairobi, Kenya on 10th - 15th of October 2010 for support by

the UN Women in the first five years of its work with particular focus on promoting women's economic rights and empowerment, the enjoyment of peace and security for all African women and the elimination of sexual and gender based violence that manifests in the everyday life of African women and girls.

- Respond to the three focus areas highlighted above in a way that takes into account the lived experiences of African women in order to respond appropriately by addressing the underlying causes that have sustained inequalities in Africa between women and men, the haves and the disadvantaged or marginalized and those most affected by poverty, exclusion, disempowerment.
- Ensure that any form of indicators developed to monitor and measure progress are formulated with the involvement of key stakeholders to ensure relevance;
- Ensure that among the top positions and at all decision making levels within the UN Women there is a fair representation of African woman who have wide experience working on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Africa region and further expect that the appointment process will remain transparent in order to have the best candidates;
- Appoint at least two feminist economists with experience working in Africa as part of the policy team to take leadership in designing alternative development models that enable poor people in Africa the majority of whom are women to move out of poverty.
- Ensure that the regional and national level structures for the UN Women within Africa have a fair representation of African women in key positions with the essential competencies and experience of working in partnership with African women in developing appropriate and relevant policies and programmes for Africa.
- Guarantee that the UN Women facilitates the formation of regional and national Advisory Committees that include representatives from the African women's movement and networks to contribute to setting the agenda that responds to the unique needs of African women.
- Remain committed to support and provide resources to African women's organizations and networks operating at different levels especially so given that the national level structures in Africa for women's empowerment are still weak and under-resourced.

We, further call upon the Under Secretary- General to visit several African countries, given the diversity within the region, in the first three months after the establishment of the UN Women to engage with African women and have a first hand experience of the issues that we are faced with on a daily basis.

We remain committed to urge African leaders and governments to increase their contributions to the resources of the UN Women and work closely with the 10 African countries on the Executive Board to share our ideas, knowledge and interests with the leadership of the UN Women.