



## Northern Uganda women speak out on Juba talks

Guided by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004), five women's organizations with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and under the leadership of the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) engaged in consultations from 10 – 14 October in Northern Uganda. These consultations were undertaken to demonstrate solidarity with the women of Northern Uganda and gather the views of women most acutely affected by the 20-year conflict on the current ongoing peace process in Juba.

Over the course of five days, over 200 women from five districts (Gulu, Pader, Amuru, Kitgum and Lira), representing over 25 organizations and constituencies uniformly called for enduring peace in Uganda. Representatives of district leadership, Muslim, Catholic, Anglican and lay communities, civil society and IDP camps all appealed for the parties in Juba to remain fully committed to sitting together at the peace table to build a comprehensive and peaceful future for all of Uganda. The members of the Civil Society Women's Peace Coalition strongly support the voices of those consulted, noting with urgency several messages from across the districts visited.

The women of Northern Uganda call for peace at all costs, expressing their exhaustion and profound sadness at the suffering of so many in the greater North. They call for all engaged in the negotiations to speak the language of peace, with one voice, to the people of Uganda and to each other, and to ensure that their actions reaffirm their commitment to peace. The women emphasized that there should be no return home without peace. They implore the parties to consider the specific impact the conflict has had on women: elderly, young, mothers, sisters and daughters of Uganda. They have borne the burden of conflict and know the sorrow of loss and pain of violence, which no justice mechanism, including the International Criminal Court can repair. They stand ready to nurture peace in their homes and communities and support all parties to do the same. Those that have been displaced



and disenfranchised are hungry to go home to their lands, to reap the fruits of Uganda's soil and to build homes for future generations.

The Civil Society Women's Peace Coalition acknowledges and is encouraged by the important steps taken by the Government of Southern Sudan and the efforts of both parties to the negotiations to come together to bring an end to this conflict. In response to the women of Northern Uganda, taking into account their concerns and messages and in solidarity with them, the Civil Society Women's Peace Coalition recommend the following to those engaged in the Juba process:

- Speak the language of peace, to each other and to the people of Uganda, so that all are encouraged by your commitment to the process;
- That all involved in the peace process hold themselves accountable to the women of Uganda and the Great Lakes region who have borne the burden of this conflict;
- Take into consideration the inclusion of perspectives from communities which have long suffered such as women and girls displaced internally by the conflict, and women and girls associated with fighting forces;
- Guarantee that the process and its monitoring include the protection of the rights of women and girls, especially with respect to their bodily integrity;
- Ensure that the Office of the Mediator and the parties to the negotiations have sufficient gender and women's rights expertise so that the perspectives and rights of women and girls might be fully taken into account;
- Finally, recognize and seek the participation of women in the peace process as called for in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The voices of women must be heard and represented in Juba so that the perspectives of women in peacebuilding might contribute to a full and enduring peace for Uganda.

The members of the Civil Society Women's Peace Coalition, with the support of UNIFEM continue to encourage the inclusion of women's perspectives and voices in the peace talks, call on the international community to express it's commitment to the process, and remain committed to fulfilling the vision of a just and sustainable peace in Uganda.

-- *The Uganda Women's Network, its 17 member organizations, allies and the women of the Greater North*