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Banjul, The Gambia

REPORT

**EXPERT SESSION OF THE EIGHTH AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN (BEIJING +15)**

INTRODUCTION

1. The expert session of the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +15) took place from 16 to 18 November 2009 in Banjul, The Gambia. The countries represented were as follows: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2. The intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) represented were: the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) secretariat, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

3. Also represented were the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Liaison Office to AU and ECA, UNIFEM headquarters, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Liaison Office to AU and ECA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Volunteers (UNDP/UNV) Office, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Liaison Office, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) headquarters, the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) Regional Office for West Africa, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Regional Office for West Africa, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Millennium Campaign, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa and The Gambia Office, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

4. There were also experts from the following civil society organizations: ABOYA, Action Aid, Africa in Democracy and Good Governance (ADG), African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), APGWA, Association des facilitatrices Africaines - AFA/NENUPHAR, Association Femmes Juristes Sénégal, Association of African Women for Research & Development (AAWORD), Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Centre Africain pour l'Éducation aux Droits Humains (CAEDHU), Centre of Arab Women, Child Fund, COFDEF, Collectif Sénégalais des Africaines pour la promotion de l'éducation relative à l'environnement – COSAPERÉ, Collective Capacity for Peace and Development, Concern Universal, COSEF, DNAFA, Eastern African Subregional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), EFANET, Egyptian Business Women's Association, Equality Now, Farmers

Organization Network in Ghana, FAWE – Gambia, Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS), FEMNET Senegal, FLAG, Gambia College, Brikama, Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children – GAMCOTRAP, Gambia Family Planning Association, GAMESCO, GEEP/EED, Gender Awareness Trust, Gender Links, Icon Women and Young People’s Leadership, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE), Kenya National Human Rights Commission, MPFIPE, NAWFA, Ong/Consel Consultatif des femmes au Togo(CCoFT), Oxfam GB, Raddho rencontre Africaine pour la défense des droits de l’homme, RADI WILDAF, RAFET, Réseau Genre Ducongad, RNPT, Rural Women Empowerment Network (RUWEN), SAWID, SONKE Gender Justice, West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP) Gambia, WiLDAF Ghana, WISDOM, Women Advancement Support, Women and Law in Southern Africa (WILSA), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)-West Africa, Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe, Worldview - The Gambia, WWA, Young People in the Media, Refugee Women’s Committee of the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANZO), the Child Protection Alliance, the Gambia College, Top Range Nigeria Limited, Union nationale des syndicats autonomes du Sénégal/UNASAS, WANEP, WASSU Gambia, Réseau paix et sécurité des femmes de l’espace CEDEAO (RESPFECO), Forum for Africa Kafo, West Africa Network for Peace-building (WANEP), West African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Senegal, FAWE Burundi, FAWE Refugees & IDPs Network (WARIPNET), WILDAF, WISDOM-Gambia, Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC), NaccimaWomen Advancement for Economic & Leadership Empowerment in Africa (WAELE), Women Advancement Support, Women and Law in Southern Africa, Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), Women for Democracy and Development (WODD), Women in Health and Education, Women’s Group (NARWOG) Nigeria, African Businesswomen Organization (ORFA), AID-Afrique, Forum international des femmes pour la paix, l’égalité et le développement (FIFED), Côte d’Ivoire, Alliance de développement des femmes rurales en Tunisie, Association pour le Développement économique des femmes du Sénégal (ADEFS), Réseau Suggil Jigeen, Comité Sénégalais sur les pratiques traditionnelles néfastes à la Santé de la mère et de l’enfant (COSEPRAT.ciaf), la Confédération des syndicats autonomes du Sénégal, Coalition of Zimbabwe, YIN Training Centre-Nigeria, Young Women’s Christian Association, l’Association de femmes juristes du Tchad, Association des femmes juristes du Burkina, Zonta International, Transparency International Niger, Coordination des ONG and associations féminines du Niger (CONGAFEN), Centre of Arab Women for training and Research (CAWTAR), WILDAF Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo, Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organizations (BOCONGO), Groupe Pivot droit et citoyenneté des femmes (GPIOCE) Mali, Federation Burkinabe pour la promotion des personnes handicapées (FEBAH), Coalition Burkinabé des droits des femmes (CBDF), Association des Femmes, Collectif des associations et ONG féminines du Burundi (CAFOB), Association DUSHIREHAMWE of Burundi, African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), African Elegance, Alliances for Africa, Association des facilitatrices, Association nationale des organisations professionnelles agricoles de la Côte d’Ivoire (ANOPACI), Association nationale pour l’alphabétisation et de la formation des adultes (ANAFI), Association of African Women Research and Development (AAWORD/AFARD), Association of Small-Scale Enterprises in Tourism, Brufut Women Farmers, Cape Verdean Women’s Organization, Centrale d’autopromotion Paysanne, Center Africain pour l’éducation aux droits humains (CAEDHU), Center for Women’s Health and Information (CEWHIN), Collective Capacity for Peace and Development (COCPED-NIG), Collège des femmes des OPA du Bénin, Confédération démocratique des travailleurs du Sénégal (CDTS), Confédération des syndicats autonomes du Sénégal, Confédération Paysanne du Faso, Conseil consultatif des femmes au Togo (CCoFT), Conseil sénégalais des femmes (COSEF), Equality Now Regional Office, Farmers Organization Network in Ghana (FONG), Fédération des associations féminines du Sénégal

(FAFS), Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia, FEMNET Cameroon, Gambia Agricultural Economic Socio-Cultural Organization, Gender Links, Groupe pour l'étude et l'enseignement de la population (GEEP), Icon Women and Young People's Leadership Academy, International Development Support Services (IDSS), International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), ISIS Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, Jamil Foundation, National Eritrean Women, Movement des femmes de la Confédération nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal, Salahule Women Empowerment Association (YWCA).

Opening of the meeting (agenda item 4)

5. Ms. Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), welcomed government officials and participants to the meeting of the ECA Committee on Women and Development (CWD) and the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women, being hosted by the Government of The Gambia. She said that Her Excellency Hajja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of The Gambia, was to be commended for her commitment to the advancement of African women, and to the promotion of their rights. She underscored the fruitful collaboration between ECA and its partners, the United Nations family and in particular, UNDP, for "working as one" to organize the current meeting.

6. Ms Ben Barka noted that during the 2004 review, as many as 44 countries had pledged to accelerate the implementation process while focusing on the priority areas at national level. The fact that women's access to decision-making was increasing did not preclude the need to strengthen access at all levels. Public awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS had also grown considerably as a result of better education, sensitization and continued advocacy by development stakeholders. Despite all that, challenges remained as policies and programmes still treated gender concerns as separate project interventions.

7. She said that changes had been made to the CWD, which had been at variance with other existing ECA statutory committees as the only subsidiary body that convened at ministerial level, in order to align it with the structures of other ECA subsidiary organs.

8. She took note of the linkages between the goals set in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and encouraged the participants to seek find ways of defining actionable synergies between the ICPD and the BPFA.

9. In her opening statement, Her Excellency Ms. Julia Dolly Joiner, Commissioner for Political Affairs, AUC, noted that the meeting was being held at a time when the continent was experiencing multiple crises, including the economic and financial turmoil and climate change which, in themselves, represented major human rights concerns and a challenge for the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPFA. It is crucial to come up with policy responses that take into account the voices of the marginalized and that lead to development strategies that are inclusive, sustainable and respectful of universal rights.

10. AU member States had demonstrated their commitment to implement the BPFA and had made steady progress, as evidenced by the integration of gender equality principles into national legal and institutional frameworks. Of note was the recently adopted strategic plan of the AU Commission, which was built on the commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the strategic plan, the AUC had reaffirmed its commitment to the accelerated implementation of the AU Gender Policy, 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 (SDGEA).

11. The conference should consider three main issues: (i) the importance of human rights in general and, in particular, the impact of global economic and environmental actions on women's rights; (ii) the significance of synergy and coordinated action in a world of increased integration; (iii) the imperative of investing resources in promotion and development, to ensure a greater stakeholder buy-in and compliance monitoring. Finally, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its Twelfth Ordinary Session in February 2009 had declared 2010-2020 the African Women's Decade, and had called upon all stakeholders to contribute to its success.

12. In her opening statement, Ms. Chinwe Dike, United Nations Resident Coordinator for The Gambia, thanked the President of The Gambia for creating an enabling environment for women to progress and realize their potential. She also thanked the Vice-President of The Gambia for her commitment to improving women's empowerment. To her, the meeting was of special importance because it involved deliberations and discussions on issues related to women's rights and empowerment and gender equality. The agenda for the meeting was very critical as it focused on devising practicable means for ensuring that women, who formed more than half of Africa's population, were able to access the basic necessities of life.

13. It was important to recognize the regional initiatives on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that the African Union had taken, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, as well as the 50/50 gender balance principle. All stakeholders should ensure that those commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the BPFSA, were applied to all women, including those at the grassroots level. The present conference should try to answer some important questions, including the following: "How far have we come in promoting gender equality? What difference have the protocols and conventions on gender equality made in the lives of African women, children and men? Are women now better empowered to make their own independent choices? How much do women at the grassroots level know about the Beijing +15 conference and CEDAW? What else can be done to change attitudes to ensure better recognition of women's contribution to the global economy"?

14. In conclusion, she encouraged all actors to focus on allocating adequate resources for gender work; advocacy for the continuous creation and enhancement of an enabling policy environment; continuous support for legislative reforms which engender women's empowerment; and systematic monitoring and evaluation. It was vitally important to move from commitment to action and from action to tangible impact in order to ensure that gender equality was achieved.

15. Representing the Government of The Gambia, Ms. Fatou Jassej-Kuyateh, Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Vice-President, delivered the opening statement of the CWD, which also constituted the expert session of the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing +15). The Gambian leadership, in particular the President and the Vice-President, had made a special contribution to social development. All participants should reflect on their contribution towards improving the lives of women, especially under the slogan of the Beijing +15 review—*From Commitment to Action*. The Gambia had recorded some successes in terms of the critical areas of concern of the BPFSA, particularly women in decision-making, and welcomed the global campaign to end violence against women and girls.

16. Finally, gender experts should be encouraged to critically assess each issue and come up with sustainable recommendations that would lead to the effective implementation of the BPPA. The experts were fully committed to formulating sound policy decisions that would be presented to the ministerial meeting scheduled to commence on 19 November 2009.

Election of the Bureau (agenda item 5)

17. After consulting in various subregional clusters, experts elected the following countries into the Bureau of the Committee on Women and Development (CWD):

Chair:	The Gambia
Vice Chair:	Zimbabwe
Second Vice-Chair:	Mauritania
Third Vice-Chair:	Equatorial Guinea
Rapporteur:	Uganda

Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 6)

18. The agenda and programme of work were presented and adopted.

Remarks by the Chair of the Committee on Women and Development (CWD)
(agenda item 7)

19. On behalf of The Gambia, the CWD Chair made brief remarks, expressing sincere appreciation to the experts for electing The Gambia as Chair of CWD. She also welcomed members of the Bureau and expressed the hope that the newly elected Bureau will serve the Committee well.

Presentation of the new structure of the CWD (agenda item 8)

20. ECA presented the new structure of the CWD and recalled the historical process that led to the creation of the Committee in 1997 as a statutory body of experts and policymakers that provides guidance and advises ECA on women and gender issues. The CWD was reformed following the review by the ECA Conference of Ministers at its 40th session in 2007, during which it had been agreed to align all the Commission's statutory organs, including the CWD. That review had led to the transformation of the CWD from a committee composed of ministers to one composed of experts and policymakers, like all other ECA statutory organs. The roles, mandate and periodicity of the CWD meetings were presented.

21. During the discussion, delegates raised the following issues, including some procedural matters. Clarity was sought on whether the current CWD had the mandate to validate the proposed CWD structure. The secretariat responded that the 2007 ECA Conference of Ministers held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, had provided such a mandate. Clarification was also sought on the rationale behind the two-year cycle of the CWD meetings. The secretariat responded that the cycle corresponded to the biennial programmatic cycle of ECA. Regarding the involvement of the regional economic communities (RECs) as observers in the CWD, it was indicated that they were already observers in CWD meetings. Note was taken to add Tunisia on the list of North African countries in the CWD document.

22. Finally, it was recommended that there should be a much more balanced linguistic representation among the Bureau members, to ensure that delegates had access to the same level of information and that they participated actively in the deliberations.

Presentation of the Progress Report of the Gender, Women in Development Section for the Biennium 2008-2009 (agenda item 9)

23. ECA presented the work of the Gender and Women in Development (GWID) Section of the African Centre for Gender and Social Development (ACGSD) for the biennium 2008-2009, the structure of the Centre, its biennial work programme, as well as the strategy adopted to realize them, including research, policy analysis, advocacy, capacity-building, advisory services, monitoring and reporting.

24. With regard to achievements, the Centre had organized the Fifth Session of the CWD in 2008 as well as the Sixth Session, which also served as the Eighth Regional Conference on Women. In terms of publications, the Centre had produced the Compendium on Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming in 2008, and the 2009 edition was under production. The African Women's Report would be launched during the Eighth Africa Regional Conference. As part of the ECA contribution to the Africa-wide campaign on violence against women and girls (VAW), and the Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women" campaign, ECA had organized a workshop where it had presented to gender and statistics experts a methodology for collecting data on VAW. Time-use guidelines on the collection of gender statistics had also been produced, and Ghana had used those guidelines to collect data on time use.

25. The GWID had collaborated with many stakeholders, including development partners, the United Nations family, the Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI), the Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW), the AU Commission, the African Development Bank, and the regional economic communities. That collaboration had resulted in the review of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on peace and security; the High-level Policy Dialogue; the African Development Forum (ADF); and the regional action plan by the RECs to integrate gender into their work for better mainstreaming of gender into the policies and programmes of member States. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Gender Development Centre had put in place a gender policy strategic plan, while the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) had used the ECA African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) to develop a gender monitoring tool.

26. The GWID had operationalized the e-network of gender machineries and held two e-discussions, the last of which had been part of the review process where member States had shared their experience regarding the review. ECA had provided advisory services to a number of countries, including Botswana, Djibouti, Ghana, Namibia, Senegal and Zambia, on time-use surveys as well as the AGDI. In addition, workshops on gender statistics methodologies had been held in all subregions, except for North Africa, where one was still being planned. Finally, while many lessons had been learned, many challenges remained to be addressed, including limited availability of resources and data on social development indicators. GWID had learned that working relationships with national research institutions, machineries and policymakers would be sustained and that partnerships with AU, AfDB, the United Nations family and the RECs had proved beneficial in delivering and reaching out beyond what ECA could have done on its own. That collaborative partnership needed continuous nurturing and strengthening. Civil society

organizations had also been keys in providing outreach for the normative work of the GWID subprogramme.

27. In the ensuing discussions, countries asked about the criteria used by ECA to render advisory services to member States. They also noted that advisory services should be aligned with ECA programmatic services, to complete the pending AGDI activities. ECA acknowledged that the delay in rolling out the AGDI was due to resource limitations. Regarding the Compendium on Best Practices, clarification was sought on the criteria used by ECA to profile member States in the compendium. ECA also encouraged member States to respond to the questionnaire and share their best practices. Finally, ECA clarified that advisory services were rendered upon request from member States.

Presentation of the Gender and Women in Development work programme and priorities for the biennium 2010-2011 (agenda item 10)

28. ECA presented the work programme for the implementation of the activities of the subprogramme for the biennium 2010-2011. Activities under the subprogramme were under the responsibility of the African Centre for Gender and Social Development. The subprogramme would have an increased focus on gender-based research and analysis as well as on technical cooperation activities to support policymaking, and on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as they related to the social and economic advancement of women. The strategy would also focus on providing support to member States and their intergovernmental institutions for the implementation of regional and global platforms for action on gender equality. The three key areas of focus of the subprogramme were as follows:

- Enhanced capacity of member States and regional intergovernmental bodies to mainstream gender concerns into policies and programmes
- Improved capacity of member States to implement and report on regional and global commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment
- Enhanced capacity of member States to address the persistent and emerging social and economic concerns of women relating to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

29. In the ensuing discussions, the delegates expressed their appreciation for the activities planned by ECA to better assist member States in their efforts to implement the BPFA. While stressing the importance of the technical cooperation activities of ECA, delegates asked for more information on the procedures to be followed to access ECA/ACGS services as reflected in the 2010-2011 work programme. They also requested that ECA extend its gender statistics training to national gender experts, in addition to statisticians. In the area of poverty, experts requested ECA to accelerate efforts to find better ways of addressing the negative impacts of the financial and economic crises on women. Countries appreciated ECA efforts to address VAW, and requested ECA to strengthen their capacity in that regard.

Presentation on the Beijing + 15 process (agenda item 11)

30. ECA recalled that the Beijing +15 process had been shared with and adopted by the ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs in August 2008. Various steps had been taken to produce the Beijing +15 regional report. Two questionnaires had been administered to member States, soliciting qualitative and quantitative data by 30 April 2009. To date, 47 out of the

53 member countries had responded to the questionnaire, translating into an 89 per cent response rate.

31. Three sets of reports for the Beijing +15 review were being produced: 1) The synthesis report for the Beijing +15 review, which summarized the performance of member States based on their responses to the questionnaires; 2) The regional report, which would be included in the CSW documents; 3) The global report, which was being produced by DAW from responses to the qualitative questionnaire. That report would show the trends and issues in the various regions of the world rather than mention the names of countries. The regional report, which was being drafted by ECA, incorporated all the national reports in detail and was expected to be enriched with the inputs from the present conference and circulated at the 2010 CSW meeting, but would not be discussed.

32. The production of the regional Beijing + 15 report faced many challenges, including late responses, lack of up-to-date information to cover the period of the report and ambiguities. Due to those problems, there were gaps in both the synthesis and the regional reports under the various critical areas, for which more detailed information was needed.

33. Finally, it was noted that countries which had not submitted their report to ECA could continue to submit their completed questionnaires **until 25 November 2009**, which would enable ECA to incorporate the findings in the final regional report to be circulated during the CSW meeting.

Presentation on the Beijing + 15 synthesis report (agenda item 12)

34. ECA presented the synthesis report highlighting the progress made and the challenges faced in the implementation of the BPFA and outlined recommendations for accelerating its implementation as Africa's contribution to the global review scheduled to take place in 2010 in New York.

35. The main findings from the report included the uneven progress in many of the 12 Critical Areas of concern. For example, progress was noted in primary education enrolment though the quality issue remained a challenge. It was observed that many countries were likely to attain gender parity in enrolment as a result of various incentives encouraging enrolment of the girl-child. Significant steps had been taken to put policies and legislation in place to achieve gender equality. Some member States had registered success in the area of decision-making and had reached the 30 per cent threshold set by the BPFA.

36. The report noted that there were challenges in implementing the BPFA, such as the prevalence of the feminization of poverty, persistence of high maternal mortality rates, exceedingly high HIV female infection rates compared to men, and widespread violence against women across the continent.

37. The synthesis report also took into account the ICPD +15 and MDG reports, as both raised concerns about gender equality and women's empowerment.

38. In the ensuing discussions, delegates noted that countries that had responded to the questionnaire should be mentioned in the synthesis report; good practices at country level should be reflected in the report; Governments should be allowed to revisit and update their responses to

the questionnaire; the issue of women's access to sport should be included in the report; and the issue of women with disabilities should be given special consideration. Recommendations were made for emerging and other issues such as climate change, the media and conflict to be the focus areas for the next five years. The synthesis report should include figures and pie charts to make it more informative.

39. Special note was made that the session was focusing on the general performance of the continent rather than individual countries. As the report was being submitted to DAW, there was limited time for countries to update the already submitted information. Both the synthesis report and the regional report would be amended based on inputs from the conference.

Presentation by civil society (agenda item 13)

40. A representative from civil society organizations (CSOs) delivered a statement containing inputs by national and subregional CSOs. The statement acknowledged that while the implementation of the BPFA had consumed much time and resources, achievements had fallen short of the stated targets.

41. Recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the BPFA over the next five years suggested by the CSOs for consideration by Governments included: Ratification of global, regional and subregional human rights instruments; allocation of sufficient resources to support structures responsible for ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment (including appropriations by the AU women's trust fund for training and education programmes for women politicians aspiring for elected office); enhanced awareness and education about women's rights and advancement through communication instruments such as the media; meeting the periodic reporting requirements of the regional gender equality instruments; addressing the issue of impunity in Africa with regard to violations of human rights of African citizens (particularly violence against women and children in conflict situations); ensuring that member States prioritize women's health; investing in women's education with particular attention to science and technology training; and building the capacity of rural women in agriculture and strengthening women's land rights.

Modalities for group discussion (agenda item 14)

42. Groups were organized around the following seven themes: economic empowerment, peace and security, violence against women, women's representation and participation in all areas of decision-making, sexual and reproductive health, STIs, HIV and AIDS, climate change and food security, and financing for gender equality.

43. The group discussions were to identify key strategic actions for each of the themes and the enabling institutional measures required for their implementation, including the following: i) capacity enhancement; ii) coordination; iii) policy development and review; iv) resource allocation; v) social mobilization; vi) accountability, monitoring and evaluation; and vii) any other issues deemed important.

Discussion and adoption of the outcome of group discussions (agenda items 15 and 16)

The recommendations of the groups were as follows:

44. On **economic empowerment of women**, priority should be given to employment creation for women through targeted entrepreneurship, skills and business development, paying particular attention to rural women. Countries should put in place measures aimed at accelerating agricultural productivity through advanced technology. Renewed measures should be instituted to enforce laws and policies that guarantee women's equal access to and control over productive resources, particularly access to credit and land. Steps should be taken to ensure and reinforce access of girls and young women to secondary, technical, vocational and tertiary education, paying particular attention to creating enabling opportunities for female advancement in maths, science and ICT. Programmes aimed at the retention of girls in school, including those who become pregnant whilst in school, should be scaled up or instituted. This may be achieved through measures such as the prevention of early marriages and sexual violence as well as incentives such as cash transfers and other social protection measures. Programmes aimed at raising male awareness should be accelerated and there should be an investment in technical capacities to collect, produce, analyse and disseminate sex-disaggregated data. Women and girls' leadership capacity should also be reinforced.

45. Regarding **peace and security**, priority should be given to research and domestication of international instruments on women, peace and security, through national legislation and action plans, paying particular attention to implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. This should be facilitated by the creation or strengthening of existing structures to monitor implementation, sensitization, dissemination and capacity-building of relevant stakeholders. Particular focus should be on conflict prevention and the design of early warning mechanisms, and reform of legal, security systems and institutions. There should be continuous exchange of experiences between countries and sharing of best practices in women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution and reconstruction efforts using ICT. Synergies and partnerships between agencies working in the field of violence against women and girls and those working in peace and security should also be effectively pursued. Efforts should be strengthened to secure the full reintegration of victims of war through measures such as the provision of psychological support and the creation of reparation and compensation funds. Inter-State peer learning in conflict prevention and resolution, human rights education involving parliamentarians, women, media, youth, the security sector, the judiciary and community leaders should also be pursued. Capacity should be built and peer learning encouraged in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in human rights education. Institutional mechanisms for protection and assistance to victims of conflicts, especially refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees should be strengthened.

46. With respect to **violence against women**, the importance of ensuring that in the next five years countries have a multi-sectoral and multi-faceted plan to address gender-based violence was underscored. Synergies should be developed and actions taken based on global and regional initiatives on violence against women, within the framework of the United Nations Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women and Girls" campaign, with particular attention being paid to its Africa component. For the remaining five-year period, the core feature and components of these campaigns should be zero tolerance towards violence against women and the girl-child, and strict law enforcement, in addition to legal literacy and education. State and non-State actors working in the field of violence against women should intensify their partnerships with a view to maximizing the use of resources and providing outreach to victims. Multi-sectoral approaches should also be used to ensure that women and girl-children benefit from holistic services. They should be legally empowered through the provision and dissemination of information on their legal rights and services through formal and non-formal educational channels. Men and boys are to be effectively targeted as agents and partners of change. There should be

continuous gender training of law enforcement agents, the judiciary, paralegals and relevant sector agents for effective application of laws and policies. Members of parliament should also be sensitized. Social welfare institutions, the police and the judiciary in particular should be afforded full support to deal promptly with issues of violence. To increase outreach in services and responses, paralegal, medical and social support services should be provided at community level. National action plans should be accompanied by effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Where national databases and observatories exist, they should be strengthened. There is need to establish a strong mechanism for accountability.

47. Pertaining to **women's representation and participation in all areas of decision-making**, the importance of ensuring constitutional guarantees and provisions on gender parity was underscored. Participants made the following recommendation such instruments should be underpinned by the relevant enabling legislation/laws and institutional mechanisms and policies that are supported by adequate resources; enforcement of laws/legislation supported by institutionalized affirmative action measures such as quotas for both public and private areas of decision-making, combined with capacity enhancement, research and creation of databases; empowerment of women and the girl-child through education: awareness-raising to transform societal and cultural attitudes/perceptions of both women and men towards women's leadership in both the public and private areas of decision-making; political will, leadership and advocacy from both public and private sector leaders anchored by accountability, monitoring and evaluation systems that include the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM); enhanced role for the media, men and civil society organizations; reform of private sector leadership selection procedures and systems, electoral systems and internal system of political parties/organizations; strengthening/facilitation of networking and collaboration among women in critical areas of concern across different groups of women.

48. As regards **sexual and reproductive health, STIs and HIV and AIDS**, political commitment to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) should be demonstrated through its recognition as a human right and the allocation of resources for the effective and timely implementation of the 1994 ICPD Framework, as reaffirmed in the ICPD +15 Africa report, the Maputo Plan of Action and the AU Road Map. STIs, HIV and AIDS should be effectively integrated into SRH services and treated as an inseparable component. SRH services and information should be available and accessible to both men and women of all age categories and locations, paying particular attention to the special needs of the youth. Integrated approaches to SRH delivery should be pursued through the provision of services: contraception, obstetrical facilities, safe blood and child health at community level. Comprehensive sex education (or family life) courses in schools should be mandatory for both boys and girls. The critical role of men in family planning should also be fully recognized and mainstreamed into all interventions, and family planning should be repositioned as a development priority. Increased budgetary allocation should be directed towards the treatment of preventable deaths, obstetric fistula, reproductive cancers and the reduction of current rates of maternal and neonatal mortality. Countries should reduce maternal deaths by 50 per cent by 2015 through effective and fully funded interventions. The shortage of qualified health personnel should be addressed by providing incentives for them to work in rural areas, instituting measures to reduce the brain drain, and upgrading skills and curricular of personnel at all levels. Behavioural change communication with the active participation of the media should be vigorously pursued through regular training, support, coordination and collaboration between the media and sexual and reproductive health organizations and agencies. The gender equality component of STIS, HIV and AIDS programmes should be strengthened to address vulnerability of women and girls and ensure their access to prevention, treatment and care.

49. Concerning the **climate change and food security** threat, it was emphasized that Governments need to develop gender-responsive policies on climate change which focus on agriculture, water resource management, energy, forest use and management; transportation and technology transfer. Further recommendations were made for countries to develop agricultural policies and programmes that address the differentiated impacts of climate change and in particular the gendered impact. There is need to integrate gender into existing and upcoming science research on climate change and climate policy. Governments and research institutions should support the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data. Knowledge-sharing and peer learning networks should be promoted across the region.

50. Moving to **financing for gender equality**, it was agreed that this issue should be positioned as a *sine qua non* for the achievement gender equality in all countries. Countries are required to develop policies that give full impetus to financing for gender equality, are aligned with and run concurrently with all national development plans such as the Poverty Reduction Strategies. Development partners should streamline and condition their support to Governments on the basis of identified national priorities. With a view to ensuring that the agenda for women receives full financial support and attention, gender-sensitive budgeting by all sectors, enhanced by guidelines, should be instituted and implemented and disaggregated data collection should be pursued to identify gaps, align resources and monitor the impact of financing for gender equality at subnational and national levels. As part of this measure, stakeholders should review the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the entire aid architecture as a whole on a continuous basis to ensure that the attainment of the MDGs are not jeopardized at country level and that allocation of funds at both private and public sector levels yield high impact. There is need to explore alternative sources of funding other than traditional sources, with emphasis on the setting up of solidarity funds for gender equality at national, subregional and regional levels, and increased partnerships with the private sector. Governments should provide financing for developing decent jobs in the formal and informal sectors, and providing social protection for women. Capacity-building of national machineries is imperative for effective implementation of financing for gender equality measures. These machineries should be multi-sectoral and include ministries of planning and budgeting.

51. In the area of **capacity enhancement**, participants noted that issues of gender equality among public and private sector actors should be given urgent attention. This should include the imperative and methods of gender mainstreaming in policy, programming and implementation and gender-sensitive budgeting. They underscored the need for **effective partnerships** in a bid to facilitate and strengthen networking and collaboration among women on areas of critical concern. Governments and civil society need to collaborate and establish consultative mechanisms. For effective **coordination**, participants underscored the importance of establishing strategic and operational frameworks to ensure inter-sectoral consultation for gender mainstreaming. To leverage **resource allocation**, gender budgeting should be institutionalized by 2012. Fund allocation and utilization should be monitored. Governments should mobilize resources domestically. There is need to review the aid architecture to ensure that African Governments develop a strategy to integrate the MDGs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the Paris Declaration on Effectiveness. Governments should create an enabling environment for CSOs, NGOs and the private sector to support financing for gender equality.

Presentation on Africa-wide campaign on violence against women (agenda item 17)

52. A UNIFEM representative presented the Africa regional component of the United Nations Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women and Girls" campaign. It was noted that VAW is an extreme manifestation of pervasive discrimination against women and girls, as well as deeply entrenched unequal power relations between men and women. VAW as a development concern, and supporting statistics were presented. The UNIFEM representative highlighted the fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected in situation of conflict and other emergency situations where they face high risks of sexual violence. Through the presentation, the effects of VAW were also shared.

53. The presentation was well received and appreciated, especially the information it provided on member States' involvement in the launch and rollout process. Participants suggested that the Secretary-General's campaign be linked with the Africa-wide campaign which is an outcome of the African Development Forum so as to ensure seamless efforts and maximized usage of resources. As a way of maintaining the momentum, the campaign should be anchored within the framework of the 16 days of activism against VAW, and continue up to the Summit of the Heads of State and Government in January 2010.

Presentation of the draft programme of the ministerial session (agenda item 18)

54. The ministerial programme was presented to the experts.

Consideration and adoption of the draft report and Ministerial Statement (agenda item 19)

55. In presenting the report, which had been circulated to delegates, the Rapporteur of the CWD recalled the agenda items and encompassing issues that had been discussed during the expert sessions, further noting that the report would be presented to the Ministers.

56. The experts adopted the draft report and Ministerial Statement with amendments.

Any other business (agenda item 20)

57. There was no issue to consider under this agenda item.

Closing of the Expert's meeting (agenda item 21)

58. The CWD Chair, who is also the representative of The Gambia, thanked the Government of the Gambia for hosting the Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 15), especially the Vice-President for her commitment in ensuring the success of the meeting.

59. A representative of ECA recalled the recent meeting on ICPD which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2009 to review progress made on population and development over the past fifteen years that highlighted clear linkages between the commitments made for the implementation of the BPFA and the MDGs. Although considerable progress had been made towards the fulfilment of gender equality and empowerment of women, many challenges remained throughout the continent.

60. H.E. Mr. Ousman Sonko, Minister of Interior for the Government of the Gambia, on behalf of his Government, expressed sincere appreciation and gratitude to the participants of the

Conference. He expressed satisfaction with the Conference and welcomed the zeal with which participants had worked, resulting in the adoption of the draft Ministerial Statement. He noted the high level of attendance as an attestation of the commitment towards implementing both regional and global gender instruments. Despite noticeable progress, serious gaps are witnessed in various fields, affecting the well-being of women. In order to overcome some challenges, there is need to foster closer partnership with all stakeholders, and especially with civil society organizations.