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PARTICIPANTS

Convener:
Speaker of SA National Assembly – Baleka Mbete

Special Guests:
President of Pan African Parliament (PAP) – HE Dr. Gertrude Mongella, MP
First Lady of SA – Ms. Zanele Mbeki
Chair of PAP Women’s Caucus – Hon. Ms. Landiwa Sagadogo, MP
Head: Communication, Nepad Secretariat – Ms. Thaninga Shope-Linney

Participants:

1. Hon. Abdoulaye Adjaratou - MP [Togo]
2. Hon. Hounkaila Aissata - MP [Niger]
5. Hon. Betty Asibot - MP [Guinee]
7. Hon. Nguni Effa - MP [Cameroon]
8. Hon. Dr Farida Ilimi - MP [Algeria]
9. Hon. Loide Kasingo - MP [Namibia]
11. Hon. Nozigwe Madlala Routledge - MP [South Africa]
12. Hon. Farida Mahomed- MP [South Africa]
13. Hon. Maggie Mbaakanyi - MP [Botswana]
14. Hon. Makhosazana Mdlalose - MP [South Africa]
15. Hon. Mabel Mentor - MP [South Africa]
16. Hon. Mary R. Mugyenyi - MP [Uganda]
18. Hon. Isabelle Silikati - MP [Cameroon]
19. Hon. Maria Theresa Toyi - MP [Burundi]
21. Ms. Martha Lubeka - Director - Staff [PAP SA]
22. Ms. Maylem Rivero - Counsellor [Cuban Embassy]
23. Mr. Fredy Couillen - Official [Cuban Embassy]
INTRODUCTION

A preparatory meeting for the second International Women’s Conference was held on the 10th of May 2008 at Gallagher Estate in Johannesburg. This meeting, convened by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms. Baleka Mbete, was attended by women from the Pan-African Parliament Women’s Caucus, as well as women MPs from the South African Parliament, and women representing business and civil society. This report will highlight main discussions during that meeting, as well as its outcomes.

MEETING OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- To prepare for the second International Women’s Conference by agreeing on the date;
- Discussing the themes for the second conference;
- Discussing the location of the IWC initiative within the PAP.

The Speaker impressed upon the participants that the meeting must be a platform for talking and sharing ideas, as well as to track progress that has been made since 2006. She also informed the preparatory meeting that the African Capacity Building Fund (ACBF) had expressed its willingness to provide partial funding for IWC II.
In her opening statement the Speaker welcomed all present, and expressed her appreciation for the presence of the PAP Gender Caucus at the meeting as it is important that women use every available opportunity to network on common interests. Their presence would also serve as a continuation of previous interactions, because the first IWC meeting was attended by some of the PAP Women’s Caucus MPs, as well as President Mongella and the First Lady Mrs Mbeki. The Speaker further highlighted the importance of the meeting as the beginning of a process that would ensure that the IWC initiative is located within the PAP.

An overview was given of the rationale that gave rise to the first conference that was held in May 2006. The theme of the first conference was “Women and the Economic Recovery of Africa” and under this theme, the meeting dealt extensively with the following issues:

- Agriculture, land and water;
- Education and Skills development;
- Poverty, Employment and trade;
- Combating trafficking of Women and Children; and
- Women’s Health

Among other things, she indicated that the main purpose of the first meeting was to enable African women to track progress made by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Specifically, the aim was to look at how women were involved in NEPAD activities and the extent to which women’s issues were catered for in NEPAD and how women can make inputs in the implementation of NEPAD activities. Therefore, during the May 2006 meeting the NEPAD Secretariat was invited and the former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Mucavele participated in the meeting.

This interaction laid a foundation for women to have an understanding of issues such as: how NEDAP works; and how this programme delivers to women. It was also during this first meeting that women had an opportunity to engage with the NEPAD Gender Task Team. The Speaker informed participants that there was a NEPAD Representative at this meeting and it would therefore be proper for her to brief the preparatory meeting about any changes or developments at NEPAD relating to women and gender issues.
Ms Shope-Linney informed the meeting that the Head of the Nepad Gender Unit, Ms Litha Musyimi Ogana had left to join the AU’s headquarters in Addis Ababa. She was responsible for the Gender Task Team, which she re-located within the AU Gender Directorate, the work for which will now continue under the AU. The Spanish Development Fund however, is still located within the secretariat and the disbursement of funds had already started.

Another change within NEPAD was that the CEO Dr Mucavele had left and his Deputy Ambassador Willougby is acting in this role until a new replacement is appointed. Lastly, one of the important initiatives being undertaken is the process of integrating NEPAD into the AU structures. Ms Shope-Linney informed the meeting that this exercise was underway and it involves representatives from the NEPAD Secretariat and the AU Commission and it was expected that the process would be finalised in July during the meeting of the NEPAD Implementation Committee which takes place on the margins of the AU Summit.

Commending the SA Speaker on convening this meeting, President Mongella stressed the importance of honouring commitments made at the last conference. She reflected on the challenges still facing women in Africa today in their struggle to gain representation at all levels of governance within their own countries and at a continental level. It is therefore important that those women who have been appointed to positions of responsibility must ensure that they use these positions to advance the gender and women agenda in Africa.

She also lamented the fact that women at the PAP are still under-represented constituting a mere 45 out of about 255 PAP MPs and South Africa was one of the first Member Parliaments to deploy three women to the PAP, and this is commendable. President Mongella suggested that another preparatory meeting be arranged in order
to have in-depth discussions on issues relating to the second IWC meeting. In this regard, she committed herself to ensure that this exercise succeeds and that the PAP Women’s Caucus and the Gender Committee will be involved.

**Ms Zubeida Shaik**  
**Programme Manager [PMP]**

Ms Zubeida Shaik informed participants that their information packs included the following documents:

- Strategic Action Plan from the first meeting of the IWC;
- The Report of the first meeting of the IWC;
- A proposal from the Parliament of RSA regarding the IWC II; and
- A Questionnaire.

She stated that the questionnaire was drafted for all participants of the first IWC meeting in order to enable them to, among other things, reflect on progress made since the first meeting. The intention was for the RSA Parliamentary Millennium Programme (PMP) to analyse the responses that would be received from participants and collate them into a composite document ahead of the second meeting. She also informed the meeting that it was important for the PAP to be part of the process and to indicate at what level of its structures the IWC initiative would be taken up.
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Two main issues were discussed: the date for the second conference, and the themes to be discussed. Also discussed was the role of the women MPs within the PAP.

DATE

The month of August was suggested, as this is Women’s Month in many countries on the continent including South Africa. There were no objections to this suggestion, although a suggestion was made that the conference takes place at the end of August.

THEMES

Participants suggested that the following themes be included:

- Women and technology
- Women and the media
- Women and the environment
- Women and energy
- Women and good governance in Africa
- Women and AIDS in Africa
- Women, Violence and Health in Africa;
- The Girl-Child and Elderly Women in Africa
- Women and infrastructure
- Women and food security
- African Human Rights instruments in the context of women’s rights
- Power and decision-making
- Evaluation of macro-economic policies and issues of global trade.

It was suggested that the themes be broader so as to include several sub-themes.
OTHER ISSUES

Other issues discussed included:

- Work done by women should be focused on eliminating economic barriers that still exist.
- Implementation of what has been agreed upon remains a key challenge, and therefore it was important to work towards ensuring that mechanisms for the implementation of resolutions are made.
- There was a need expressed to strengthen the PAP’s Women’s Caucus which currently exists as an informal, and not a permanent structure within the PAP.
- Related to this, there is also a need to clarify the roles of the Women’s Caucus in relation to the Gender Committee.

- There were concerns about the fact that women were not represented in the PAP Committee dealing with trade issues, and yet, the Gender Committee is dominated by women. The PAP Women’s Caucus needs to set the agenda to promote women at the PAP.
- An audit is needed of various networks that deal with issues of gender and women and this is a task that could be undertaken by the PAP.
- It would be important for women not to lose sight of the fact that political parties are the starting point to advance women issues, thus mechanisms to influence these should also be considered.
- A concern was raised about the existence of too many different women’s networks in Africa in general, but also in specific countries in particular, and this was seen as problematic. It would be important to create an African women’s movement in order to strengthen the collective voice of women.
- The involvement of the PAP within the IWC process is important because it is through PAP that an integrative platform for women can be created. It would offer an opportunity to review the architecture dealing with women issues in Africa and consider options for ensuring that the different women networks are well organised.
- The importance for the PAP to devise ways to monitor the implementation of relevant instruments, especially those dealing with the promotion of women’s rights.

In response to some of the issues raised, President Mongella urged participants not only to focus on the problems but to also seek solutions to these problems. She stressed that the onus is on them to ensure that PAP takes charge of the women agenda in a structured way. She also mentioned that some of the problems raised in relation to the PAP Women’s Caucus are being addressed. In this regard, she committed herself to continue to seek solutions that would enable the PAP to better handle gender and women issues. She also made a commitment that the PAP would make resources available for a second preparatory meeting towards the second IWC. In this regard, she made an appeal to the NEPAD Secretariat to come on board and consider arrangements that can be made to enable the Parliament to better access resources from NEPAD. She emphasised the fact that the PAP has a role to monitor the AU Organs but this may not have been thoroughly done in the past. Therefore it was important that PAP facilitate a platform that would strengthen the collective voice of women in Africa by ensuring that PAP is able to carry on with the work that was started by the Parliament of RSA.
The Speaker of the National Assembly of RSA indicated that the existence of different networks in Africa should not be seen as a problem. However, what is important is to ensure that such networks cooperate with each other. She urged participants to take note for instance, of the resuscitation of the Pan-African Women’s Organisation (PAWO) which recently met in South Africa. She commented that it is important that PAWO is strengthened and become part of the process of networking among women in Africa. She also noted the importance of women MPs to continue networking with other women because they (women MPs) only have a set number of years as MPs.

WAY FORWARD

The following was agreed upon:

- It was agreed that a second preparatory meeting should be convened: this meeting must take place in June (early).
- The PAP would be responsible for organising the second preparatory meeting mentioned above.
- The documents of the first meeting circulated by the Parliament of RSA must be translated to other languages.