



Women, Endogenous Governance and Conflict Prevention in West Africa

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Workshop

« Women, Endogenous Governance and Conflict
Prevention in West Africa »

This workshop was the occasion to consolidate the West Africa Women's Group.

Volume 2 ♦ Working Documents

compiled by

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INTRODUCTION

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- **Statement by Mr. Adamou MAHAMAN BATOURE**, Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Promotion of Women and Child Protection, Republic of Niger

**Intervention by Mr. Mangone NIANG,
Director of CELHTO/AU**

Mr. Chief Director,

Head of the Unit "Governance, conflicts, Peace and security" of the Sahel and West Africa Club,

Dear Participants,

Several centuries ago, men and women, worn-out by conflicts and dissension, met to reflect on new methods for negotiation and understanding. It was exactly in 1236 in Kangaba (present-day Mali) a territory which was pluralistic both sociologically and linguistically.

Their consultation enabled one of the first texts known about the organization of the city in the Sahel region and West Africa: The Charter of Kurukan Fuga, to be elaborated. This monumental document a version of which the African Union office in Niamey was able to collect and systematize at a workshop that brought together traditional and modern communicators in Guinea (Kankan: 2-10 March 1998), is a living example, from the onset, of the untiring effort and will of the African people to establish peace and harmony after protracted periods of crisis and upheaval. Elsewhere in Africa and in the world, such significant and important documents can be found.

They disprove the often developed idea that history brings false hopes, that universal consensus was the sole rule and that the relationship between men and women operated on the method of exclusion and domination. In short, that there was nothing to expect from history with regard to social negotiation.

On the contrary, they justify the process initiated by the Sahel and West Africa Club, according to which solutions to African problems must be imperatively sought inside the societies which create them. It is sufficient to revisit African history in order to draw positive lessons which give information of the normal and negotiated development of human societies. It is sufficient to pursue the process of decisive societal breakdowns in order to see the causes of social misconduct.

Certainly, we are not taken in by it. We are very aware of the limits of traditional or alternative mediations in the resolution of conflicts which are currently tearing Africa apart. Political exploitation, identical regroupings and issues related to natural resources particularly oil, are so many factors which contribute to reinforce the levels of dissension. As can be observed, every time we open the radio or watch the television, they are still central issues of our current affairs.

All Africans, whether they admit it or pretend not to recognize it, suffer from this situation. Perhaps it is in this unfortunate and hopeless situation that the clues for a new African foundation must be sought, in which the intervention of new players is also necessary particularly women among whom war has taken a heavy toll as victims of irrational violence in our time.

Insofar as conflicts persist and entail considerable human and financial cost, as governance records such deficiencies that stun us and as the political power is

only in place to eliminate the authorities which should put it in check, the time is finally opportune for us in this continent to change our political culture. The time has come to put an end to the devastating blind beliefs which are crippling Africa.

It is now time to understand that there is no providential man. There are only men and women who are struggling to shape their destinies. Everywhere, here and elsewhere, that is how history is interpreted. If the loss of good sense to understand, like shattered memory, decline in human value, self hate and hatred of others, is the basis of our malaise and bleak destiny, the restoration of good sense must be part of a major project in our political, economic, social and cultural programmes. It is far from being a question of metaphysics but efficiency and sustainable means of action. It is a question of mapping out a real strategy of African integration in peace and harmony.

The African Union Commission has indicated in relevant documents, the place which must henceforth be due to women in Africa. It has spelt out targets, made recommendations and even called for the follow-up of these recommendations.

It has organized parity between men and women within the commission. In the formal Declaration on the equality between men and women in Africa, the Heads of State and Government of member states of the African Union, after reaffirming their "Commitment to pursue, intensify and accelerate efforts to promote equality between men and women at all levels" gave the assurance of the "full participation and representation of women in the peace process, including conflict prevention, management and resolution and post conflict reconstruction in Africa". Now that the die is cast, we all, men and women, still have to re-invoke the spirit in order to make it operational.

It is particularly for you, ladies and dear sisters, to henceforth pave the way for us through an original and new approach, to provide us with a sensuous and appeased model of governance, and to tell us how we can finally put an end to war!

Thank you.

Statement by Mr Adamou MAHAMAN BATOURE, Chief Director of the Ministry of Women's Advancement and Child welfare, Republic of Niger

Representatives of International Organizations,

Representatives of NGOs and women's Associations,

Participants and invited guests,

Allow me, first and foremost, to express to you my profound thanks for having attended this important international meeting in your large numbers.

As you are aware, women represent the most important section of the population in our various states.

In fact, from the decade of women instituted by the UN between 1975 and 1985 up to its evaluation in 2005 in New York, the gender issue has assumed an increasingly important place in international meetings on human development. One of the most striking political actions in these recent years was the security council's vote on resolution 1325. I would like to remind you that this resolution not only reaffirms the need to have women's rights respected as being victims of conflicts, but also encourages international mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution to see to it that women are more represented.

With regard to the African Union, the additional protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to rights of women in Africa lays particular emphasis on the promotion of equality between men and women at all levels of the society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Women have the right to a peaceful existence and to participate in the promotion of peace and in peace keeping without which no ideal world can be created and no sustainable development is possible.

It is for this reason that this meeting, organized by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat on the theme "Women, local Governance and conflict prevention in West Africa" is being held at the opportune moment. I urge you to make a comprehensive analysis of women's role and responsibilities with regard to local governance and conflict prevention in ECOWAS countries and Mauritania.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Aware of the very important role played by women in the development process, the Government of Niger, in conformity with the international commitments to which it has regularly subscribed, has indicated its will by adopting measures in this direction.

It is in this respect that since 1996 the national policy on women's advancement and on 7 June 2000, the law 2000-008 instituting a quota system in elective and nominative posts were adopted.

Currently, thanks to the implementation of this law, women occupy high posts in the Republic's institutions.

In this respect, the presidency of the supreme court and that of the Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (Consultative Communication Authority) are entrusted to women. Six (6) women are ministers in the Government. There are also six (6) women ambassadors.

In addition to these women, there are the Directors of the Prime minister's office, a gender counsellor at the Presidency of the Republic and another in the Prime Minister's office. Women also sit in the same capacity as men at the High court of Justice, the High Council of the Communities and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council. Regarding elective posts, 14 women parliamentarians out of 113 members of parliament instead of only one woman out of the previous 83 and 671 municipal counsellors were recorded, following the legislative and municipal elections in 2004.

Quite recently, the Government has adopted the additional protocol to the African charter of Human and peoples' rights relating to women's rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In spite of these very encouraging results achieved, there are still challenges to be faced:

1. Improvement in the representation of women in decision making authorities through their capacity building in women leadership and in gender.
2. Institutional capacity building of the governmental and non governmental structures responsible for women and gender advancement.
3. A deeper involvement of women in local Governance, conflict prevention and management.

I would finally like to express my gratitude to the OECD for choosing Niger for the organization of this forum.

Thank you.

First Session

ASSESSMENT: WHAT ARE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION IN WEST AFRICA?

- 3. Introductory intervention** by Mrs. Bembello Fatoumata Agnès Diaroumeye, Sociologist (Niger)
- 4. Comments on the main legal instruments and mechanisms concerning women in conflict prevention,** by Mrs. Juliette Khady Sow, Jurist (Senegal)

What are the roles and responsibilities of women in governance and conflict prevention in West Africa? By Mrs Agnès DIAROUMEYE BEMBELLO, Sociologist

Ladies and Gentlemen, honourable participants,

Permit me to first and foremost thank the SCSAO for the initiative taken to organize this meeting on the theme "Women, Governance and conflict prevention in West Africa" and also for having chosen Niger for the holding of this meeting. In fact, this event is organized at the appropriate time, particularly at a time when the Niger National Assembly has included in the programme of its activities, the consideration of the Additional Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, relating to women's rights. At this precise moment when in the areas concerned, this issue arouses much emotion and passion to discourage women from their expectations of seeing to it that in their homes and countries, their young sisters and daughters can claim the same rights as in the countries of the West African sub-region. That the Nigerien citizen can enjoy her rights as a Human Being and as a citizen inside and outside her country.

In this respect, I think that no over cautiousness should find justification in the retreats of women whatever be the side which they claim to represent or political authorities in order to support and assist to eliminate the reservations made in the CEDEF and in the additional protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights relating to women's rights. This is because we are in a country where the Head of State has never failed to show his commitment and political will for the cause of women as testified by the law on quotas which contributed to the election of 14 women MPs and the appointment of 6 women Ministers.

Considering the limited time for the discussion of such a wide ranging and important subject, we will discuss the theme which concerns us by making a short recapitulation of efforts made by African women to promote their status in the society.

In order to understand the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of society, inevitably status must be examined as it enables roles and responsibilities to be defined. We do not believe that there is gender specificity as such in endogenous or public governance. However these roles and responsibilities which are linked to gender-specificity are seen through distorted cultural representation and thus retrograde. We will then address some key issues before presenting our conclusions.

A retrospective look at the situation of women at different levels of society generally leads to the acknowledgement that women are considered inferior to men whether it be in industrialised countries or in Africa. This judgement is explained and rationalised by stereotypes and pre-conceived cultural notions. As regards women and politics, we often hear remarks such as, "Politics are for men"; "Women should stay at home and raise the children"; "Female logic is not compatible with politics", etc. In any event, the modern world is characterised, among others, by an inequality as regards women on one hand, and by an overall lack of effective measures likely to correct this inequality, on the other. In reality, it seems as if all societies were eternally condemned to live within a culture of impunity, and injustice where above all the male alone prevails. It is urgent for African women to take stock of the situation so as to be more involved with strategies aimed at changing this situation as regards conception, application of laws, promoting the protection of their interests. For

example, the "Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination as regards women" should apply to all women, more particularly all African women, irrespective of their country and their position. In fact, it is positive parity or discrimination which must count the most; irreversible respect for the principle of equality, equal opportunities, equal opportunity for the advancement and promotion of women must be respected.

There are many strategies to achieve this. Women must understand and work towards this relentlessly. Whether it be gender strategy, integration of women in development, feminism or parity, all have their limitations, their advantages; each action group should, according to place and circumstance, be ready to unite in order to react effectively and be able to restore women's rights as citizens.

Women's route into politics is full of all sorts of traps which act as barriers. Only women's determination can triumph. Hence, African women increasingly evoke the need to defend their interests through a Panafrikan movement. This refers also somewhat to the Panafrikan Women's Organisation [Organisation Panafricaine des Femmes (OPF)] in which the main objective was to coordinate African women's action with a view to liberating African countries from colonisation. It was thus the first time that African women, with the support of their country's government, managed by a single-party structure, anticipated large-scale political action. In doing this, they stood together in political solidarity even before the creation of the AUO! Now that all African countries have attained international sovereignty, Africans can again decide and react to it with a view towards the revival of the OPF, or for the creation of a totally new mechanism in which the objectives should be to strengthen the status and role of women in view of suppressing the various inequalities in the countries; but also at the global level. This involves, of course, solidarity between women of different generations, but also different cultures in Africa and in the world. The creation of the OPF and its survival demonstrates that African women can again meet the challenge of their relationship to politics in order to bring about a movement providing hopes for generations to come notably for the development of Africa.

We should not remain silent on the impact of the United Nations' actions since 1975 after the International Year of the Woman, and the hope this gave women around the world. In this case also, the contribution by African women has been important since the framework of the Mexican Global Action Plan was based on the African Regional Action Plan. Since 1975 African women have continued to adopt and ratify numerous action plans and integration programmes for women in development which have never been implemented in most of the countries. This remains a stumbling block between decision making and their implementation in the countries. We have the right to inquire as to the possibilities of effectively promoting the position and role of women in politics if nothing is done to improve the handling of the stakes and the strengthening of women's commitment to overcome the greatest battle: to obtain the rights that are theirs.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, notably the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and with the support of other United Nations' bodies such as the FAO, UNICEF and UNDP, and bilateral support that has established a chain of integration mechanisms for women in development from the national to the regional level, even continental levels. There is much to say about the lack of improvement to these mechanisms by African women.

The under-representation, indeed the general lack of African women within the political decision-making bodies at the national, sub-regional and continental levels affects all of us. There is less unanimity as regards the solutions and application modalities to these problems. Indeed, women's efforts should be harmonised as regards public service and decision-making bodies. It is a matter of establishing,

implementing, and following laws that map out the visible path for women in politics while assuring the development and strengthening of their action as citizens. A continuous mobilisation of women is needed in politics as well as other development issues but also a legislative framework which addresses the inequalities and injustices as regards women above all when these inequalities and injustices are relayed and strengthened by preconceived notions and religious or cultural considerations. Thus the emergence of women would no longer depend upon the willingness of political powers and the notion of what is good and not good for women.

The brief retrospective look at African women and politics also illustrates that women have held various positions during various eras. Indeed, during the anti-colonial fight, some women played somewhat important roles such as a spokesperson while still a subordinate within the political groups. Women have never achieved the role of leader, head of a political party, nor have comprised advocacy groups, in other words, women never had the opportunity to form their own political group.

Among the women who participated in political activities that led to the liberation from colonisation were those who received an European education and those who were unschooled. Moreover, these women leaders played a fantastic mobilisation role within the Panafrican party of the African Democratic Rally [*Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*] (RDA) and later within the Panafrican Women's Organisation in which the militant action promoting women was deployed through a network covering all of Africa and implicated in relations with European and global organisations such as the International Democratic Federation of Women [*Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes*] (FDIF).

The advent of the multi-party system has more often relegated women's groups within "basic militant" roles which excelled in mobilising members as long as they occupied high positions within the hierarchy of political posts. Even if within some countries, the parties designated women to fill technical Ministerial posts and who in return assured financial kickbacks within a maze of bad governance, compromising women's position in politics instead of contributing to their reaching the same level as men.

It is within this context that the following major problems arise as regards women's participation in politics, government and conflict management:

1. At the international level, the reality of the insertion of Africa within the global economy and the disastrous repercussion of national indebtedness which national actors do not take into account in their decisions and in their actions which finally constitute a significant obstacle; in other words, whether man or woman within the national government, what impact can be made in conflict prevention when the strings are pulled by foreign and international economic and political powers?
2. The absence of women in politics and the steps to remedy this situation in any of the position and political roles promotion strategies (integration into development, gender, equality, feminism).
3. The lack of supported and continued political willingness of authorities and women in order to overturn the unfair and unequal practices within the socio-economic, cultural and political sectors.

4. The lack of national, regional and sub-regional solidarity between women: in most cases those who succeed no longer feel invested in the promotion of solidarity with other women. This only creates conflict between generations and is devastating to women's achievements in general; more specifically at the local level, it adds to the fear that there are donors who, in Niger, are not bothered by the political manipulation, the implementation of policies and the political game. Again, leadership must comprehend the problems, analyse them, and implement appropriate solutions for the promotion of improving the well-being of individuals, notably women.
5. A notorious lack of understanding that women face inequality and injustices as much at the global level as at the national level which hinders their effective participation in politics as well as existing laws that protect them, where the need to establish appropriate conditions for development but also in order to strengthen the more equal and effective awareness conscience of citizens.

Faced with such serious problems, we can only try to:

1. Encourage the development of female leadership at the sub-regional and continental levels to better coordinate the deployment and strengthening of women's roles and responsibilities in governance and conflict prevention;
2. Exchange experiences and knowledge of female leaders with women, on the political stakes in Africa, and also on the conditions and strategies to address the inequalities and raise citizens' awareness;
3. Lay the foundations at the sub-regional and regional levels for the fight for women against the unequal and unfavourable socio-economic, political and cultural structures;
4. Develop the basic components in view of women's political concertation on the major African and global social problems such as peace, education, youth, globalisation, etc.

In order to achieve these objectives, in March 2005 the African Link for Peace and Development [*Maillon Africain pour la Paix et le Développement*] organised a workshop on "Women leaders and politics". The participants included:

- Jeanne Martin Cissé of Guinea;
- Aimée Gnali of the Congo;
- Espérance Mutwé Karwera of Rwanda.

These women are the pioneers who carried out important work for the promotion of women in their respective countries, but also in Africa and the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is here, within this context that strategic thinking on the role of women in governance must be undertaken and their responsibilities in conflict prevention examined. Maybe to better address these issues, together we should seek answers to a certain number of key questions:

Question 1: What are the roles and responsibilities of women in endogenous governance and conflict prevention and resolution in West Africa?

They vary according to the type of conflict:

- a) Roles of women in endogenous governance as regards prevention:
 - Raising awareness of various environmental changes;
 - Information / Communication;
 - Mediators / Restorers of confidence, facilitators.
- b) In conflict resolution: (role of mediation)
 - Establishing or strengthening links or focal points of the mediation chain;
 - Transmitting messages to the parties concerned;
 - Identifying negotiation strategies in mediation; safety valve, strategist.

Women's position must be identified within the levels of society as this position helps frame women's role. Only then can strategic thinking on the roles and responsibilities of women in governance and conflict prevention be undertaken. Indeed, analysing women's position in governance and conflict management will help us shed light on women's roles and responsibilities at these levels.

a) As regards governance:

Within almost all countries, the Constitution stipulates equality for all citizens before the law: this strictly formal status of equality is destroyed as soon as the roles are defined especially those with material advantages. The limitation within women's roles as regards governance is well-known, this is explained through references, either archaic values, or an unfavourable interpretation of women in religious texts (modern governance).

b) As regards conflict prevention and management:

Cultural values determine the role and responsibilities of women in conflict prevention and management. They are stereotypes, which pertain to the sister or the mother through solidarity, are considered as infallible through ties with the family, clan or notably age.

- It seems that inequalities are exacerbated by modern governance because the individual is isolated within society, and any law can determine his/her fate whereas in endogenous governance, the individual is the group that enables the potential power to play the part of active "collegial" citizen as regards conflict prevention and management. To what extent can a man show his solidarity with a woman (see Kandji)?

- Women's power of intervention in conflict prevention provides her with leadership position and power during her intervention: it is not a means of social, political or professional advancement which will enable access to material and financial resources with defined responsibilities.

- The somewhat limited power that one or another can hold based on clearly defined criteria; in endogenous governance, the short-lived position dissolves when the problem is resolved (See ex. de la Flamme de la Paix).

Question 2: What are African women's endogenous capacities in prevention, socio-political regulation and governance?

- a) Women's own endogenous capacities: family solidarity (marriage)
 - Age-related initiation group
 - Strong mobilisation power and information;
 - Ethnic group
 - Power of control, monitoring;
 - Community group
 - Strengthening confidence in the exercising of power and the implementation of decisions;
 - Other cultural associations: Brotherhood group.

- b) Discretion's effectiveness
 - Human capacity and simplicity (mother image and stereotype by extension). Sister homeland and stereotype. Two stereotypes: sister and mother.

Question 3: How to capitalise on endogenous capacities?

- Identifying endogenous capacities and listing them through studies;
- By disseminating endogenous capacities:
 - Through education in the home (value of loyalty, honesty, sense of the Nation beyond the family);
 - Through education in school, patriotism, community feeling;
 - Through cultural activities, theatre, radio-television series;
 - Through books;
 - Through the development and strengthening of citizen awareness

Question 4: How to strengthen women's participation in government bodies?

- While building a sufficiently transparent and coordinated legal, juridical, economic environment that women are able to take hold of and understand first, then by decision-makers at various levels;
- Continuous and supportive understanding of essential and non-residual information in the city and throughout the country;
- Women must be courageous and have political willingness in order to succeed;
- Donors and partners must have a cooperation and collaboration strategy encouraging and strengthening women's participation in governance instead of using strategies that divide and disperse, which is often the case;
- Women must have clear ideas as regards their status/role which is not that of "electoral cattle" policy in governance;
- Training and education as regards good governance must be open to everyone on the basis of equality; the development and strengthening of solidarity between women; the strengthening of citizen's awareness for women and men alike.

Question 5:

- a) How to coordinate already existing regional mechanisms related to women's roles in exercising responsibilities in conflict prevention?
- b) How to encourage States to apply these mechanisms?

Since 1975, numerous capacity building and promotion mechanisms and institutions for women exist. They are increasingly created in conflict management and peace sectors. Given the difficulty of merging institutions, proceeding cautiously by carrying out a regional inquiry through these programmes is recommended. This would enable an action plan to be developed spread over a five year period, even longer (to avoid being spread too thinly) with rigorous follow-up allowing achieved results to be evaluated periodically without leniency.

- Establish information, education and training programmes in which women will deliberately constitute a majority of the workforce;
- A federation of initiatives is needed that will likely to assure the building of women's capacities in governance:
 - At the public administration level;
 - Within civil society actions, while overcoming problems of French/English language. While using existing institutions already created by the States or civil society, they would only need to be strengthened through gender-specific programmes which will have other advantages and which will be more effective in the promotion of women;
 - Capitalising on the experiences of women who were at the front lines during conflict in their countries.

Question 6: What strategies emerge from mediation and conflict prevention experiences led by women's organisations?

- a) Raise their visibility by disseminating written documentation, films of these experiences, organise televised debates in national and bilateral cultural centres (research activity);
- b) Organise consultative services within networks and institutions involved in these experiences;
- c) Organise women's study trips to Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger to meet with women who have lived through these experiences;
- d) Undertake national, sub-regional and regional solidarity promotion activities while reviving an institution such as the OPF through the participation of former women leaders such as Jeanne Martin Cissé, Sira Diop, Jacqueline Ky Zerbo, Madeleine Téfa of Cameroon, etc.

Conclusion

In concluding, the following actions could be envisaged:

1. Strengthening solidarity between women in order to promote their status, their roles and responsibilities in national, sub-regional, regional and international governance in order to avoid at all cost compartmentalisation, individualism, in order to develop synergies and promote Women's Rights;

2. Assuring partners in their support of promoting female leadership
 - At the political level;
 - Within programmes and projects (promotion of education, training and the emergence of women);
 - Apply a quota for the workforce in training, specialisation and holding of posts;
3. Build women's capacities by a research programme on the problems of promotion of female leadership firstly:
 - Historic study
 - Sociological study
 - Socio-economic study: matriarchy and governance;
4. Undertake actions over the long-term with a perspective of women working on inter-generational bridges. This would require new approaches for assistance, cooperation, etc. which are neither established nor evident.

PRESENTATION OF SOME INSTRUMENTS ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS, by Mrs Juliette KADHY SOW

Introduction

Currently, there are a variety of instruments relating to women. These instruments which regulate the involvement of women in the conflict prevention and peace building processes at all levels contribute in the same vein to the reconstruction of post conflict societies. There has been a better understanding of their role in the establishment of sustainable peace. From the exclusive status as war victims, women have become active participants in the peace process.

We can refer to some instruments at the international level such as:

- The convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDEF) or "Declaration of Women's rights"
- Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council.

And at the African regional level:

- The African charter of Human and people's rights and its protocol relating to women's rights.
- ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and good governance, additional to the Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace keeping and security of ECOWAS.

I. AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

A. The convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDEF)

This convention, adopted on 18 December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, came into force on 3 September 1981 and was ratified by 174 countries. It occupies an important place among the international treaties relating to human rights. While it recalls the inalienable rights of women, it maps out a programme of action so that states parties ensure the exercise of these rights. It tends to mitigate the negative effects of patriarchy on women.

This level covers three aspects:

1. Civic rights and legal status.

- The Exercise of the fundamental rights which participation in political life constitutes;
- The possibility to represent one's country at the international level;
- The convention insists particularly on the situation of rural women who **must** be taken into account in policy planning;

2. Procreation

The convention states in its preamble that "the role of women in procreation should not be a cause for discrimination". It is recommended to states to let it be well understood that maternity is a social function which must not hinder their development.

3. Effects of cultural factors on relations between men and women.

While recognizing that culture and tradition can contribute to restrict women from exercising their fundamental rights, the convention intended to broaden the conception about Human Rights. It encourages states to contribute to changes in behaviours and mentalities in order to succeed in eliminating stereotypes.

Many conflict or post conflict states are signatories to this convention. The consideration of its principles in the elaboration of new constitutions and strengthening of institutions enabled considerable progress to be made in establishing democracy in these countries.

B. Resolution 1325 of the United Nation's Security Council

Resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th session on 31 October 2000, is considered as a platform which enables NGOs, governments, international organizations to request the inclusion of women at all levels in conflict resolution, peace building and security. It is the very first resolution adopted by the security council which specifically examines the impact of war and conflicts on women as well as their initiatives and contributions to conflict resolution and building of sustainable peace.

The resolution recommends:

- v The participation of women at all decision making levels concerning conflict resolution and peace processes.
- v The appointment of women as executives and increase in their role in peace keeping operations as members of the civil police and members of humanitarian operations.
- v Integration of sex specificity in the DDR process in drawing up programmes, elaboration of policies and strategies and planning of peace support operations.
- v The involvement of rural women and the enhancement of internal negotiation processes during hostilities and the various transitional stages on peace.
- v The resolution particularly insists on the principle of the responsibility to protect women and girls against violent sexist acts.
- v The respect of the civil and humanitarian character of refugee camps and installations while taking into account particular needs of women and girls.
- v An effective representation of women at all decision making levels in the regional and international institutions and mechanisms for conflicts prevention, resolution and management.
- v The obligation for states to put an end to impunity which is one of the conditions most often advanced by parties in order to sit at the negotiation table.
- v

C. The limits of resolution 1325

Five years after the adoption of resolution 1325, a certain shortcoming is observed in the consideration of the gender issue with regard to the DDRs. The DDR operations are perceived as disarmaments of only armed men. In Sierra Leone, only 0.6% of participants in the DDR were women while they were estimated at 12% during the conflict. Most of the time, women and girls are considered as domestic victims while they have also been combatants. If women are very active in the community, their concerns are taken into account with difficulty in peace negotiations at the government level because they do not participate in them.

The United Nations organization still finds it difficult to apply to itself its own principles regarding the increase in the representation of women at all the decision making levels since the system is dominated by men.

Regarding the abuses committed by the staff of peace keeping operations on women, progress in rendering justice is very slow. Out of 152 persons involved, only five troop officers have been relieved of their duties. This situation is worsened by the almost lack of judicial systems in the conflict countries.

This in fact creates an environment where impunity is the rule. Once they return home, it becomes very difficult to prosecute the United Nations soldiers accused of sexual abuses.

Most African countries which contribute to peace keeping operations do not have adequate legislation on domestic violence or based on gender.

At the national level, the shortcomings of the resolution are the lack of knowledge by the women themselves and the inadequacy of the means of action and implementation. Participation of women in the review processes and mechanisms of constitutions and electoral laws is very low. But if certain countries have opted for parity and others for a quota system, there is still much to be done for a better consideration of their concerns. There is a lack of coercive measures to induce states to implement it.

More than a statement of principles is necessary to change attitudes, practices and perceptions. Although women are very active in fields such as politics during conflicts, they have the tendency to resume their traditional role after conflicts.

II- African Mechanisms

Mechanisms tend to complete or strengthen the already existing instruments.

A. The protocol to the African charter of Human and Peoples' Rights relating to women's rights.

The Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights of the OAU dated 21 October 1986 stated in its article 18,

"The state has the right to see to the elimination of any discrimination against women and to ensure women's and child welfare as stipulated in international declarations and conventions".

However, it is the protocol to the African charter of Human and Peoples' Rights relating to women's rights, adopted by the second ordinary session of the union conference on 11 July 2003 in Maputo which will enable a clear specification of the principle of equality between men and women to be made.

It recommends;

- v The elimination of discrimination against women;
- v The right of participation in the political process and decision making;
- v The right to the respect of the physical integrity and to security;
- v The right to women's welfare in armed conflicts;
- v The right to peace.

It encourages the effective application of these principles by states and commits them to adopt necessary measures at the national level for an effective fulfillment of the rights recognized in this protocol and also to ensure the increased participation of women in conflict prevention management and resolution processes at the local, regional and continental levels.

<p>B. Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good governance, additional to the Protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace keeping and security of ECOWAS.</p>

In its article 40, states undertake to eliminate all forms of prejudicial, degrading and discriminatory practices against women.

CONCLUSION

- v At the national level, two weaknesses can be underscored: Lack of knowledge by women and inadequacy of the means of action and implementation.
- v Participation of women in the review processes and mechanisms of constitutions and electoral laws is very low. Even if certain countries have opted for parity and others for a quota system, there is still much to be done for a better consideration of their concerns.
- v If most of the texts have been adopted by states, it is necessary to insure harmonization with national legislations.
- v More than a statement of principles is necessary to change attitudes, practices and perceptions. Although women are very active in fields such as politics during conflicts, they have the tendency to resume their traditional role after the conflicts.
- v Moreover, there are no measures which could induce states to implement them.

Third Session

CONFLICT PREVENTION, MEDIATION AND RESOLUTION EXPERIENCES IN WEST AFRICA

- 1. Experiences in Niger,** Mrs. Ben Wahab Aïchatou, President of the Coalition des Femmes nigériennes contre la guerre (CFNCG) [Women's Nigerien Coalition Against the War].
- 2. Experiences in Mali,** Mrs. Bintou Sanankoua, Collectif des Femmes du Mali (Women's Collective of Mali) [COFEM].
- 3. Experiences in Casamance, Senegal,** Mrs. Seynabou Male, Coordinator (CRSFPC/ACAPES).
- 4. Experiences in Guinea-Bissau,** Mrs. Macaria Barai, Coordinator, Citoyenne de Bonne volonté.
- 5. Experiences in Côte d'Ivoire,** Mrs. Salimata Porquet, President and Mrs. Françoise Kaudjhis Offoumou, Vice President, Organisation des Femmes d'Eburnie pour la Paix (OFEP)[(Organisation of Eburnien Women for Peace)].

EXPERIENCES IN NIGER by Mrs. Aïchatou BEN WAHAB

Historical Background:

Niger's experience in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution has followed a long process which should be known.

Review of the Causes of Conflict

These causes, though erroneous, are rooted in poor GDP distribution.

- areas abandoned since independence to date;
- very low representation of nomadic officers in the administration and its various units, as well as at the political level.

Over the years, there has been a loss of confidence at various levels:

- between the youths and adults;
- between the nomads and the State, who governs them;
- between the nomads and the Heads of the various tribes.

It is within this context of awareness among these young nomads that a serious drought hit Niger, destroying nature, degrading most water points, and leading to enormous loss of cattle.

It is still within this difficult context that the Tuareg rebellion started. Within the same context, the single party regime came to an end, making way for a military regime that remained in power for fifteen years. During that period, the military regime demanded a change in behaviour.

The nomads were required to settle. This was not much appreciated by the nomads, who had just witnessed the decimation of their cattle. Then began the organized departure of youths to neighbouring countries to learn how to handle arms. This led to the arrest and humiliation of many of their parents.

With the advent of democracy, the disappearance of emergency measures and preparations for the Sovereign National Conference, the rebellion in Niger stuck continuously in the North, seeking for representation in the national conference. There were violent clashes between the Niger army and the rebels, leading to many deaths and prisoners on both sides.

The nomadic populations moved in large numbers to neighbouring countries to escape from arrests by the military. More than 250 Tuareg officers left the country.

ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN DURING THE REBELLION

Initially, women acted as accomplices, housing young recruits before sending them to the rebel bases. They encouraged the men by singing their praises, and denying those who remained in the village. They made contributions to buy foodstuffs for the rebels. Some of them fled to neighbouring countries to organize meetings for the rebellion. They gave their names to the various war weapons. They helped to hide the arms for onward transportation to the mountain, but many of them perished and others were made prisoners.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- dialogue finally triumphed over violence;

- mediation by neighbouring countries and France was successful;
- calm was restored for dialogue to take place;
- the cease fire was signed;
- commitments were made by the parties;
- the arms used in the rebellion were collected and incinerated.

CONFLICT PREVENTION REQUIRES:

- compliance with and application of rules defined for the restoration of peace;
- the involvement of minorities in all the ongoing processes in Niger;
- restoration of the rule of law and social justice.

As Mrs. Bembe rightly said, peoples need enhancement for all problems arising from the failure to satisfy their basic needs.

Finally, we have tried to answer the five questions asked in the programme, even though throughout yesterday many participants discussed the various questions.

BACKGROUND

With an area of one million two hundred and sixty-seven thousand (1267000) km², a population of about eleven million (11 000 000) inhabitants (more than half of whom are women), and over 60% of its territory covered by the Sahel and desert, Niger is statistically considered as one of the poorest countries in the world.

Furthermore, the country has several ethnic groups, and is recovering from a long and difficult conflict between the State and some nomadic communities.

The culture of these human communities from the desert is doubly and simultaneously shaped by an environment of culture of limit and humanity.

In all conflicts, women play a key role. In doing so, women remain the victims of the conflicts, and that is why they should be fully involved in conflict prevention and resolution.

In Niger, the sustainability of peace depends on the consolidation and enhancement of democracy and the rule of law, which require good governance and balanced and harmonious development of the different regions of the country.

This fact guides and defines the objectives of our organization.

The "Coalition des Femmes Nigériennes Contre la Guerre (CFNCG)" (Niger Women's Coalition Against War), which from its inception has a road map that is closely followed, with the main objective of contributing to the promotion and reinforcement of women's participation in all spheres of the development process in our country.

1°) Women's endogenous capacities for conflict prevention:

Women, as mothers and spouses, were the first to decry the consequences of conflicts. Consequently, convinced of the need to restore peace in the country and aware of the consequences of conflicts, they are committed to taking measures to consolidate peace, particularly by forming groups to fight against conflicts, e.g. the "Association des femmes victimes de conflits" (CFNCG) (Association of Women Victims of Conflict).

2°) a) How can African women's capacities be developed?

Support from the entire population, and also from the competent Authorities, as well as NGO contributions, will help to develop African women's capacities.

b) How can women's capacities be enhanced in decision-making?

- appoint women to positions of responsibility for them to be present in all discussions ;
- ensure effective application of the quota system , the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and all decisions in favour of women;
- attach importance to associations.

3°) How can existing mechanisms linked to women's roles be coordinated in exercising responsibility in conflict prevention?

- promote the emergence of already existing structures;
- combine the efforts made by the structures because unity is strength, and come together to form networks or federations ;
- monitor and evaluate development actions;
- take measures to eradicate insecurity.

4°) How can States be encouraged to apply them ?

- Organize regular meetings;
- Monitor the implementation of laws and regulations;
- Lay emphasis on reintegration;
- Ask for advice and assistance.

5°) What strategies emerge from the experiences of negotiations and conflict resolution by the women or women's organizations?

- Implementation of an emergency programme ;
- Preparation of a development programme ;
- Capacity building;
- Coordination ;
- Dialogue for peace;
- Social justice for the maintenance of peace; and
- Introduction of strategies for greater participation by women.

EXPERIENCES IN MALI: The experiences of Malian women in Mediation and Conflict resolution in the Northern part of the Country, by Ms Bintou SANANKOUA

Malian women distinguished themselves in the settlement of the conflict known as the "Northern conflict".

What is the Northern conflict?

In 1990, an armed rebellion broke out in the northern part of the country between a section of the national community in the government of the Republic. Gradually all the people in the northern part of the country were affected. The rebellion against the government turned into an inter ethnic and inter community conflict which claimed many civilian lives and caused large scale displacement of people. It was not the first time that an armed rebellion had broken out in the northern part of the country. But, it had never reached such an extent of violence, destruction and loss of lives. In 1963, the touaregs of the Kidal district, a region with particularly difficult living conditions, felt neglected after having fought for independence. They revolted and attacked state property. The Malian government could not accept a rebellion which dangerously threatened national unity and territorial integrity. Reaction was not long in coming. In 1964, the rebels were brutally cracked down and the area was placed under military administration. Most of the survivors fled into exile to neighbouring saharan countries.

The quite military reaction to impose law and order temporarily established calm in the region but did not resolve the problem.

From 1963 to 1984 a terrible drought hit the sahel countries including Mali. All the countries were affected but the northern part was still more harshly hit. Development efforts undertaken after the 1964 crack down were reduced to nothing. The autocratic and corrupt regime was not advisedly making use of the solidarity and international assistance targeted for Mali.

There was large scale exodus of people from the north. Both nomads and sedentary moved in all directions, towards southern Malian towns, neighbouring countries like Libya and Palestine.

The Touaregs who went towards Libya, Lebanon or Tchad were absorbed into the training camps of Islamic legions.

The second rebellion broke out in June 1990 owing to the returnee of exiles of the first rebellion and the 1973 and 1985 droughts. Some of rebels wanted to forget the humiliations imposed by the military administration in the zone. Other rebels, politicized and hardened by their participation in different liberation wars (Tchad, Palestine) or in training camps in Libya wanted to impose a greater participation of the nomad community in the management of affairs of the Malian state. Once again there was a military reaction to impose law and order. The military this time fought against heavily armed and militarily prepared men. The bloody fighting reached such scope of violence, caused large scale displacement of people and took so many civilian and military lives that women could not continue to look on without reacting. In this chaos the government seemed powerless to put an end to the rebellion.

CULTURE HERITAGE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Traditionally in Mali, war is considered as a man's business. Women are completely excluded. They had never been involved in mediation nor in conflict resolution. It is more in the anxiety for protection than for discrimination in a region which had experienced abductions and raids characterized by kidnapping of women and children. War is considered both as too serious and too dangerous to risk the life and freedom of women. As soon as war became imminent, women and children were sheltered and put under surveillance. At the end of research into African traditions and human rights in East Africa, Mad. Yolande Diallo indicated that women were never killed in conflicts in East Africa but were abducted and married by their conquerors. She explained the fact by the idea that people formed about her "woman is the origin, source of life. If women were killed in fighting, the flood of life will soon be dried up"¹

Is it the survival of this tradition that takes women away from the battle field which at least partly explains their absence or low presence on the fronts of prevention, mediation and resolution of armed conflicts in spite of the changes and upheavals in the society and the international environment?

By being involved in conflict resolution in the north, Malians infringe this unwritten law. They had several good reasons.

- By its violence, the considerable material means of destruction, the losses in human lives in all communities, the current rebellion dangerously threatens national unity and cohesion. Should women look on without reacting?
- The government faces difficulties in ending the rebellion, in spite of the signing of the Tamnasset² agreements with the involvement of neighbours like Algeria or resource persons like Mr. Ahmed Baba Miské.
- The March 1991 resolution³ in which women played a significant role and liberated women's initiatives. Malians decided to seize the opportunity which the establishment of democracy offered to the various sections of the nation, to express themselves in order to be involved in conflict resolution.
- With the persistence of the conflict (which broke out in June 1990) the social fabric and cultural references threatened to explode. Our culture imposes on mothers to protect the child of another woman whatever be the offence committed.
- Sedentary women were seen hiding young rebels pursued by the administration at the back of their houses. A disturbing and new reality is that the population attacked them and described them as traitors and denounced them. Can women who risked their lives for the establishment of democracy in Mali continue to passively look on while Mali is being torn apart?
- Women were convinced that it was possible to stop the spiral of violence. The rebellion destroyed the entire social system but it however functioned. Rebels were seen entrusting their families to a sedentary friend before joining the fighting. Heads of garrisons who had nomad wives and were responsible for tracking down rebels, abstained from crossing the red

¹ M r. Yolande Diallo, *African Traditions and Human rights*, Geneva, 1978 p.8

² The ceasefire agreements signed in Tamnasset on 6 January 1991 between the government and rebel movements had to restore peace but was not the case

³ On 26 March 1991 the popular and bloody struggle by Malians against 2 years of dictatorship began.

lines, that is, attacking the camps of certain personalities where rebels had taken refuge. Women clearly understood that the importance of sharing experiences and interdependence of the conflicting group imposed a common destiny on them.

HOW WERE WOMEN INVOLVED?

Women manifested their action in the ongoing democratic process. They formed an association, the national movement for the preservation of peace, a formal association registered in the territorial administration. They acted as separate members of the civil society. It is in this respect that they participated in the national conference held from 27 July to 12 August 1991 which decided on the holding of a special conference on the problem in the North. They therefore participated in the Ségou conference from 25 to 27 November and the Mopti conference from 16 to 18 December 1991.

They took part in the regional consultations on the problem in the north, organized by the government in the whole national territory and widely expressed themselves on the issue. Apart from these formal meetings, they did sensitization work on the field by visiting conflict areas and talking to the various protagonists, the administration, the communities and the rebels.

How was the women's action welcomed? The administration was openly hostile to the involvement of women on the field considered too dangerous, (anecdote of the attack with foot from the ground). From the outset, it delayed in preparing and convening meetings with the communities, torn between custom and the wind of democratization. When it realized that the action was fruitful, it became more receptive. When the rebels took the town of Kidal hostage to prevent its population from participating in the 1992 constitutional referendum, it was the administration itself which suggested and facilitated the intervention of women movements. When this movement arrived at Kidal by military aircraft, they succeeded in persuading the rebels to renounce their boycott plan and subscribed to the new current policy in the country. They boarded the plane when the Gao women arrived.

Women clearly accepted the process in the communities, particularly women were involved directly or indirectly through their husbands, wives of soldiers or through their children, combatant mothers or wives living among the sedentary. Gradually, other women got involved. Men left this responsibility to women. When many people among the civilian population and armed combatants were wounded by an armed attack. They were all sent to the same hospital at the same time. Women went to their bedside accompanied by wives and parents of the two camps. Confronted with this sight of victims and aggressors suffering the same fate, they undertook to put a lot of effort into ending this stupid conflict.

From the outset, the rebels accepted women's involvement. The women took advantage of their knowledge of the environment and their civil code. They knew that the rebels would not attack women and that the rebels would listen to any information they had. Under military dictatorship, soldiers' wives at the Firhoun Camp, accompanied by a former school director who had educated most of them, succeeded in talking to them and returning intact with a vehicle. Members of the national movement for the maintenance of peace met and brought a Red Cross vehicle. It was proved to them that the rebels were neither unapproachable or insensitive. (The idea that their children could go down in history as descendants of thieves was unbearable)

THE END OF CONFLICT AND MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN

With the establishment of democracy, the new authority in Mali decided on a political solution of the issue in the northern part. There were negotiations and signing of agreement between the government and armed combatants but this did not involve women much in the formalization phase of the peace (signing of the national pact on 11 April 1992 in Bamako.)

They joined forces to explain to the people the contents of the pact and to appease them because of the delay in mobilizing funds for its implementation and if need be remind them of the non observance of the pact.

The national pact showed its limits with the persistence of insecurity and act of banditry. The process of intercommunity meetings began, initiated by the people themselves. Women were represented at each of these meetings by a single person. This did not at all reflect the decisive role they played in the relief of tensions and establishment of dialogue.

The ceremony of the peace flame on 27 March 1997 in Tombouctou confirmed the restoration of peace in the north.

Women were very little involved on the other fronts of conflict in the country. They did not openly intervene in very frequent conflicts between farmers and cattle rearers almost everywhere.

Out of more than 2000 women's associations established in favour of democratization, only two deals with issues of conflict and peace. These are National women's movement for peace maintenance and national unity and the Association of women for peace initiatives which, in addition to the aim of improving the skills of the people for conflict management and prevention, is active in the fight against proliferation and circulation of light weapons.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally, women are far removed from conflict areas. In Mali, democratization and the serious nature of the conflict in the north have propelled them to limelight. The experience achieved in mediation, sensitization and negotiation is not capitalized and used to assist in resolving sometimes very violent local conflicts which shake the national community periodically.

Today, with the changes in Africa and the world, sidelining women in conflict issues is no longer justified. They are the main victims of conflicts; they have acquired considerable expertise that should be a pity to be lost. A normal functioning of democracy which involves equitable and equal assess of women to decision making authorities and exercise of power and therefore good governance can be the solution to the problem.

Women must be members of established and formalized groups so that their presence is felt as interlocutors.

EXPERIENCES IN SENEGAL : Example of USOFORAL, Women's Organization in Casamance, Southern region of Senegal, by Mrs Seynabou MALE.

INTRODUCTION

"USOFORAL" which means let us unite in diola language is a women's movement in Casamance in the southern region of Senegal where an armed rebellion broke out since 1982. These women were traumatized, shaken and concerned by the dead and mutilated people, the violence as well as the deterioration of the region in all areas. They therefore dared to rise up, organize, inform and train in order to act for the establishment of peace but also for more fairness among the sexes.

We shall first and foremost present the conflict situation in Casamance, then the situation of women and their strategies for the establishment of sustainable peace.

I. Presentation of the situation

Natural Casamance, divided since its 1984 administrative reform into two administration regions, Kolda and Ziguinchor regions had been plagued by an armed rebellion which was claiming independence. This rebellion was initiated by the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). It had a multiethnic character even if the diolas, the majority in Basse Casamance (Lower Casamance), Ziguinchor region constitute the main component. Fighting and acts of violence were more frequent and intensive in Basse Casamance but the movement was extended to the East towards the Kolda region. The conflict had political, economic, socio-cultural and psychological consequences. Women and children, important pillars of the ethnic communities of Casamance were desecrated by rape, abductions mutilations, mines and brutal death.

In fact, the conflict caused far reaching social devastations with families broken, villages torn apart, distorted even broken social relations. Because of increasing insecurity people abandoned their villages and countries to seek refuge in neighbouring countries towards the Gambia in the north and Guinea Bissau in the south. These countries are still bases for the separatist movement but for some months now, there had been accusations against a certain wing of the MFDC for causing insecurity in the country.

The conflict resulted in worsening the poverty of people particularly women as testified by the DSRP carried out recently in the two regions: sharp decrease in the purchasing power, low food production, problems of access to basic social services, environmental pollution by mines. Until recent date, technical state services functioned in many zones where illicit activities, anarchical forest depletion, stick ups, etc prospered. All these activities traumatized the people particularly women, forced to risk these dangers to feed their children.

Today, people aspire deeply for peace. The state and the MFDC agree on the need for a civil and political solution to the conflict through negotiations.

Various events (pre-negotiation meetings, seminars) characterized by general agreements on peace, show the will of the two protagonists to negotiate. However as regards modalities, divergences prevail between the different factions of the MFDC. The fragmentation of the political wing as well as the military wing brings more confusion in the situation. Salif Sadio, proclaimed chief of defence staff represents this radical wing. There are two opposing camps. The César Badiatte camp supported by Guinea Bissau against the Salif Sadio camp which reaffirms its devotion to the independence of Casamance.

II. Women in Conflicts

Naomi E.N. Akpan rightly talks about the consequences of conflicts on women in a magazine of Wipnet: "Experience of women is distinctly different from that of men: intentional massacre, rape, mutilation ,forced displacement, kidnapping, trafficking, torture of women and girls and other forms of discriminatory violence an still current in present day conflicts. Women are confronted with lack of food and water while assuming their role as family heads and single parents. It is women who collect the pieces, dress wounds and reconstruct the communities. It is however a secondary role which devolves on them in current conflict management and this was not the case traditionally"

It must be observed that in Casamance, the history of the communities testifies that women play a role in conflict prevention, management and resolution: According to the leader of the MFDC. "They are the red cross and fire service of the community" in other words, they have the right to intervene among combatants to demand peace when mankind is threatened because they are life givers. It is almost a holy command, for offenders could suffer terrible consequences. Traditionally, women intervene in conflicts in the domestic environment (for example, in order to settle disputes between husband and wife, the daughters in law can correct their brother) and even publically but on a limited scope (village, inter village, in the same ethnic community). Women mostly use "strikes" rituals, prayers, dances, libations, processions, etc to show their commitment.

They do not question the established order and do not take advantage of the situation to seek positions and free themselves. Current armed conflicts involve numerous and diverse players and transcend borders of the country. Customs and values of players are not the same. One would say that women are bogged down! Moreover their activities become evident only when the situation seems to be at a standstill and when there is no solution.

The role of women in the outbreak of conflicts must however not be neglected. Therefore in Casamance as regard the commitment of the MFDC combatants, an oath is taken in the holy woods held by men as well as women. It can be admitted that women were involved to some extent in decision making for the war through the mystical preparation of the combatants.

Confronted with the excesses of this "exhausting and nagging" crisis as Professor Nouha Cissé describes it, women became involved in the search for peace, trying to break the oath made in the woods. In fact, the upsurge in violence and rape from 1990 enabled women to understand the danger of the community and the need to act, hence the involvement of women in fetish.

III. Usoforal, model of women's organization: objectives, strategies, results, problems.

For many years, the state showed real indifference in conflict management in Casamance. Up to the beginning of 1990, it was the law of silence. Few people dared to talk about the conflict because of denouncements, arrests, disappearances and summary executions. The civil society then gradually became involved. It is in this respect that the research group of the Women and Development commission (CFD) of Acapes organized the Women Forum for Peace in November 1999.

Recapitulation of the objectives.

The main objective of our organization is to contribute to the emergence of a women's leadership in peace building and social restructuring for a more equitable society. Our strategies particularly hinge on sensitization, training, establishment of relations and coaching.

- **Sensitization** relates to the ideals of peace, return of displaced persons and ex servicemen, pardon, reconciliation and reconstruction. Several means are used; theatre, meetings painting, collection of oral literature and discussion forums.
- **Training is focused on peace building:** analysis of conflicts, mediation but also lobbying, women leadership, creation and management of enterprises, dyeing or any other form of training desired by women and which enables them to further mobilize for peace building.
- **Establishment of relations:** Usoforal has devoted an important place in its programme of activities for exchange visits at the local and national levels. An exchange trip with a women's organization to the serere countryside with parents joking with the Diolas enabled the conflict to be further decompartmentalized in order to let its national dimension be understood. The Dakar trade fair entitled "the talking loincloth" consolidated the solidarity of women in the remaining part of Senegal with women in the southern part.
- **Coaching:** we supported women to acquire equipments like decorticator at the German embassy to relieve them of domestic chores.

CONCLUSION

The project's activities enabled us to really pursue the targeted objectives. We can say that the ECE [**E**space **C**ommunautaire de **E**nam pore] is currently one of the most stable areas in Casamance even if we have not been able to respond to the many particularly economic appeals of the people mainly women, displaced people and ex servicemen who have returned to the village.

We are convinced that the grass root work from the traditional and socio cultural areas is the major guarantee for a sustainable peace in Casamance. Like everywhere else, in spite of all these activities, women are rarely present when negotiations start if not as spectators. Several factors explain this situation:

- Women's organizations and interventions are often very informal;
- Women prefer acting behind the scenes and in the natural extension of the roles as mothers and more in the domestic sphere than public even if one can be consoled by thinking that "in african societies in general, if the

institutional and public power is masculine, it can be affirmed that strategic power is feminine.”

- Solidarity is very weak among associations and women’s NGOs. They find it difficult to emerge and impose themselves among civil society organizations vested since very long by men because it concerns other areas of power. We consider that women (+from 50%) in all societies can and must act to take their destiny in their own hands:
 - Organize, seek information and train
 - Act by creating national and international solidarity links.
 - Have confidence in their capacities to completely assume their citizenship in term of awareness and strong proposals capable of reversing the trends.

EXPERIENCES IN GUINEA BISSAU by Mrs Macaria BARAI

(Or. Portuguese)

I. INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, this workshop is of great significance by providing the participants fighting for peace with the possibility of sharing their experiences in mediation and conflict prevention on the field. Just the will to share experiences is essential to avert the recurrence of conflict; if we consider that the mission is urgent and cannot be differed, each of us should ensure that there is a drastic reduction in global conflicts, particularly on the African continent and in our respective countries.

II. ACHIEVEMENTS

Experiences are as varied as the local environment in which entire communities suffering from the repercussions of armed and unarmed conflicts live. In these armed and unarmed conflicts, it is particularly women and children who are most affected because of their sex and social condition. Despite the fact that they are victims of these conflicts, most of the time, they assume the important role of guarantor of family subsistence in the midst of chaos and destruction. They are particularly active in peace movements in the communities in spite of the fact that negotiating tables are imbalanced with regard to representation.

In the case of Guinea Bissau, one of the poorest countries in the world known for its social, political, financial and economic problems since its independence in 1974 and particularly during the twelve months of politico-military war from 1998 to 1999, women continue to play the role of assuming the responsibility for the sustenance of the family as well as in mediation and conflict prevention. Here are some experiences which will be of particular interest to distinguished participants at this workshop.

- a. During the politico-military conflict of 1998 to 1999, the three main religions in the country, Islam, the Evangelical Church and the Catholic church formed a very strong union when they saw the hopelessness of families who could not find other members of the family, who walked long distances with aged persons and the sick while bullets flew here and there, children dying for lack of food, with sickness everywhere, persons displaced without shelter and in the rain, husbands and wives looking for their partners wounded or dying without being able to save them with drugs, food, transportation and accommodation. They spared no effort in finding the means to facilitate dialogue between the two conflicting parties in order to reduce the suffering of the people. On the other hand, people helped by providing the little they had for food without taking race or religion into consideration. This is why there were no refugee camps. Churches were transformed into dormitories without considering the religions of the victims. Doctors and nurses worked for hours on end to save lives and others helped with what they could do. When there was

no bombing, women immediately arranged for products to be sold, did voluntary work like distribution of food and water to those who needed them most and expressed to them words of comfort and hope. The Union of Bissau-Guineans influenced the situation in such a way that arms were deposited and the death rate dropped.

- b. In 2000, there was a dispute between the two communities living at the borders of Guinea Bissau and Senegal, specifically Salikegne and Cambadju. It was decided that the border should be closed and this resulted in a sharp increase in prices of essential commodities. On the initiative of the youth of the two sides of the border a festival was organized in Salikegne from 17 to 19 November 2000. The objective of the festival was for each of the communities to show its best through culture. After this first festival, it was decided that a second festival should be organized in Cambadju and this was held from 1 to 3 March 2002. Considering that normally border conflicts result in divergences in development, the organizing committee chaired by my person succeeded in promoting the Cambadju province. The festival was considered the best show of the year by the RTPA. Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Gambia and Mauritania actively participated in the festival with more than 10,000 participants. The three days were animated with shows, sale of local products from participating countries, and a conference on the theme "The role of the mosque and the Catholic church in the search for the preservation and maintenance of peace. The two participants were seated side by side in order to talk to the youth. That was the most emotional part of the show. The Imam came to speak and the Bishop came to complete the vision of the Imam and vice versa. The President seemed surprised and he sat in the midst of the two religious heads and participated in the discussion with the youth. The other themes were the role of the youth in the process of consolidating peace, National Integration and Development". The woman as main player of socio-economic development and promotion of peace" "The Kansala Empire and border movement of populations in the promotion of peace." "The Health of the youth: AIDS, Drugs and Reproductive Health" etc. The social and economic infrastructures were established with the construction of 5 depots to stock unsold goods in the cross border market from Saturday, 5 bungalows, put at the disposal of the youth for their meetings, known as Marcaria and visited by international NGOs. There is portable water, a generator set of 25 KVA, and a community school. An association of girls from Cambadju was established. They already benefit from training in the Sub-region-This international festival for sub-regional peace and Integration testified to the fact that there are no borders. ECOWAS institutionalized the festival which will be organized again in Cambodju 2006
- c. The Bissau Guinean civil/society played the role of assuming responsibility in the country's most difficult moments particularly women. There were discussions with President Koumba Lala during which he was requested to play a real role as father of the nation. While ECOSOC and the United Nations Security council questioned the dissolutions of the Assembly by President Koumba Lala towards the end of 2002, the non-payment of workers salaries for more than eleven months, the successive postponement of elections, he depicted to the ECOSOC Ambassadors the difficult situation of the country with the following message "The situation in the country is worsening. People are dying because of increasing poverty; there are no food, drugs public schools and money. Those who earn the minimum income are also dying of heart attacks, high blood pressure due to problems related to family sustenance. We are going back to the ghetto of poverty. The

international community should urgently lend minimum support to the national and international NGOs and offer training and guidance which would enable them to tackle all kinds of poverty-political, economic and social"). His reaction was "It is said to learn that the bad situation is still worsening. It should be different in a country with Guinea Bissau's potentialities, The International community would most probably like to assist Guinea Bissau, but the president must at the same time have the will to respect certain minimum standards of good governance (such as separation of powers between the executive, the judiciary and the legislature or reach an agreement on his approach to tackle the poverty issue) and show certain minimum signs of democratic tendencies (no harassment of the opposition and the media, a clear sign that he will ensure free and fair elections). The fact is that no such signs are visible and it seems that the President's main interest is his own political survival. Unfortunately, the international community hesitates to provide funds in view of this evidence. The international community has nothing against this president but most likely has a problem with his actions. In the event of serious humanitarian needs, assistance will be made available to the affected people in spite of the existing political situation through UNICEF, NGOs and other organizations but I think that it would be preferable to transfer funds through channels other than the government")

- d. On 14 September 2003, the crisis broke out with the seizure of power by military officers. There was tension in the discussions between the politicians, the African Union mission and the ECOWAS. This induced the UNDP representative to invite the people from the civil society to mediate in the situation. Mediation succeeded thanks to a question posed to the politicians, "the role you assumed during the 11 months of politico-military conflict and what is your current situation"? This strategy disarmed the politicians and served as motivation for the ECOWAS delegation which immediately invited the three Presidents Obasanjo, Kufuor and Wade, who succeeded in obtaining the resignation letter from Koumba Lala. The national transitional council was established and the interim President of the Republic was appointed. On the proposal of the civil society and military officers, the Prime Minister was appointed.
- e. During the 2004 parliamentary elections, extensive work was done before, during and after the elections.

During the pre-electoral preparations, women and others dressed as men launched a campaign for elections free from violence and intimidation on 8 March. 100,000 "signatures for peace" were collected at the national level among which were those of the former President of the Republic, Henrique Pereira Rosa and the late General Veissimo Correia Seabra. The message "peaceful elections" was delivered with public events and through the radio.

On election day, a serious delay was observed in the distribution of ballot boxes and this aroused the anger of the voters. Groups of voters from the three districts of Bissau mounted barricades in the streets with wood, stones and tyres. This led to the intervention of the Rapid Intervention Brigade forces, attached to the Public order Police (POP) with AK-W machine guns and tear gas grenade launchers. On the whole, there were no casualties since there was a civil society activist Macaria Baria on the field. She succeeded in persuading the intervention forces to be calm and not to shoot or arrest anybody.

After many excited moments between the forces and the people as well as the Macaria mediation, the General Commissioner of the POP in person ordered his

men not to shoot on the people and all of a sudden the forces left the district. The people then removed the barricades. That was the end of the riots. At the same time, the missing ballot boxes arrived on the polling tables. The delay observed at the beginning of the exercise resulted in the continuation of the exercise in the night and until the following day. Women distributed food to people and this enabled a peaceful participation in the electoral process. Post election: anomalies verified on the day of election led to the challenging of the results by the incumbent. Once, there were brainstorming meetings within the civil society particularly women. Macaria and Dr. Cadi Seidi, Doctor and Lieutenant Colonel, were appointed to mediate in the situation. Contacts were established with the leaders of political parties, military officers and the chairman of the NEC. People had already started to seek refuge for fear that there would be a new war. After having received the assurance of the leaders that there would be no shooting, the women met again and left to broadcast on the radio that the work was very difficult but the child had been borne and that everybody should work together to rock the child. Immediately afterwards, the official results were announced without problem and argument.

- f. On 6 October 2004 when a coup d'état overthrew the Chief of the staff of the Armed Forces, women marched with candles to call for the end of violence.
- g. During the 2005 presidential elections, an initiative was taken by citizen of goodwill, and it was quickly embraced by many civil society organizations. The initiative aimed at contributing to the creation of an atmosphere of peace and stability. A "Pre-Electoral undertaking" was elaborated. It was a kind of pact of understanding and undertaking among all the candidates in the elections. The supposed undertaking was that candidates should accept the decision of the supreme court of Justice on the candidatures in the presidential elections, that the electoral campaign be conducted in an atmosphere of peace, fair play and respect for the dignity of man, avoiding the use of words and expressions which are against morality, dignity and respect of human rights and that the final election results should be respected and accepted by all. All the candidates signed the undertaking except the former President Koumba Lala and another candidate. The document was made known through the social media and as an instrument of civic education.

The civil society established PEACE brigades during the first and second election rounds since the law did not allow nationals to be observers. Many disturbances were prevented with the presence of the brigades.

III. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

- v responsibilities and fear of belonging to a cause;
- v As regards poverty, certain people participated to obtain their livelihood;
- v Financial expenses and hard work became the responsibility of a fixed group;
- v Social media did not help much;
- v Party leaders feared that activists would assume power;
- v Condemned and criticized;
- v Life risks;
- v Personal life and activities were brought to a stand still;
- v Unjustified defamations;

IV. HOW THESE PROBLEMS WERE RESOLVED

- v Clear vision;
- v Understand the cause and have a strong and clear arguments;
- v Have minimum financial resources , transport and communication;
- v Make available any possible time for the accomplishment of the set objectives;
- v Become untiring;
- v Give more than receive;
- v Know how to listen and have more than one option depending on the context and person;
- v Not being angry;
- v Courageous and ready for every risk;
- v Maintain stricter vigilance in the negotiating process.

V. LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

- v Economic issues;
- v Class dissatisfaction;
- v Corruption ;
- v Conflicts for self-enrichment;
- v Absence of dialogue;
- v Be a mother for all and show that one's interest is being defended;
- v Inclusion;
- v Have qualities of a good leader;
- v Defend the interests of all strive; for the well being of all;
- v Do not condemn and know how to present the crux of the problem.

■ (Original Text in Portuguese)

INTRODUCAO

No meu ponto de vista, considero este atelier de grande importancia ao proporcionar as participantes combatentes da Paz para que tenha a possibilidade de partilhar as suas experiencias na mediacao e prevencao de conflitos no terreno. Apenas a vontade de partilhar a experiencia e fundamental para evitar o reinventar da roda se considerarmos a rapida e a inadiavel missao para cada uma de nos, na reducao drastica dos conflitos no mundo e sobretudo no Continente Africano e nos nossos paises respectivos.

I. REALIZACOES

As experiencias sao diversas, como diversos sao os contextos locais em que vivem as comunidades inteiras que sofrem as consequencias dos conflitos armados e nao armados. Nestes conflitos armados e nao armados as mulheres e raparigas sao particularmente afectadas, devido ao seu sexo e a sua condicao social. Elas apesar de serem vitimas, muitas das vezes assumem um papel essencial de garante do sustento familiar, no meio do caos e da destruicao, sao particularmente activas nos movimentos pela paz ao nivel das suas comunidades, nao obstante, muitas das vezes estarem ausentes das mesas de negociacoes o que e um facto inegavel.

No caso da Guine-Bissau, um dos paises mais pobres do mundo, e conhecido dos seus problemas economicos, financeiros, politicos e sociais desde a sua independencia em 1974 e em especial nos onze meses da guerra politico-militar de 1998-1999, as mulheres continuam a assumir papeis de relevo na procura do sustento para a familia, mediacao e prevencao de conflitos. Eis aqui algumas experiencias que serao de interesse partilhar com as distintas participantes.

a) No conflito politico-militar de 1998-1999, ao testemunhar o desespero das familias, uns sem saber o paradeiro dos outros membros da familia, a andar longas distancias com velhos, doentes e as balas a voarem, criancas a morrer por falta de alimentacao, doenca, desamparados sem tectos, por baixo da chuva, maridos ou mulheres a verem os seus parceiros feridos ou a morrer sem poder salva-los com medicamento, alimentacao, transporte ou abrigo, impulsionou uma uniao muito forte entre as tres religioes principais do pais: Musulimana, Evangelica e Catolica empenhadas em arranjar formas para que as duas partes em conflitos dialogassem a fim de reduzir o sofrimento da populacao. Por outro lado, a populacao se ajudando independentemente de raca e religiao com o pouco que havia para comer, razao pela qual nao houve campo de refugiados. As igrejas foram transformadas em dormitorias independente da religiao. Os medicos e enfermeiros trabalhavam horas sem fins para salvar vidas e os que nao eram desta profissao ajudavam com o que podiam. As mulheres no calar dos bombardeamentos iam de imediato arranjar produtos para revender, efectuar trabalhos voluntarios como distribuicao de agua e alimento aos mais necessitados, dando palavra de conforto e de esperanca. A uniao dos guineenses influenciou para que as armas se calassem e que nao houvesse uma taxa elevada de mortes.

b) Em 2000, houve problema entre as duas comunidades que vivem nas fronteiras da Guine-Bissau e do Senegal, concretamente Salikegne e Cambadju e decidiram fechar a fronteira, causando aumento substancial nos precos dos bens da primeira necessidade. Por iniciativa dos jovens de ambos as fronteiras, foi organizado o primeiro festival em Salikegne de 17 a 19 de Novembro de 2000, com intuito de se conhecerem melhor atraves da cultura. Desta primeira festival, dediciu-se que a segunda seria organizado em Cambadju, o que veio a acontecer de 1-3 de Marco de 2002. Considerando que muita das vezes os conflitos a nivel das fronteira, resultam de desniveis de desenvolvimento, a comissao organizadora presidida por minha pessoa, conseguiu promover a localidade de Cambadju. O festival foi considerado como melhor evento do ano pela RTPA. Houve participacao forte do Senegal, Guine-Conakry, Gambia e Mauritania com mais de 10,000 pessoas. Os tres dias foram animados de espectaculo, vendas de produtos locais dos paises participantes,

conferencia com temas o papel das Igrejas Musulmanas e Catolicas na procura, conservacao e manutencao da paz, tendo os dois sentados lado a lado a falar aos jovens. Esta foi a parte mais emocionante do evento, vendo o Ima falar depois o Bispo a completar a sua visao e vis-versa, e o Presidente que aparece de surpresa e se instala no meio dos dois chefes religiosos e a participar tambem no debate com os jovens. Os outros temas foram: o Papel da Juventude no processo da consolidacao da Paz, Integracao Nacional e Desenvolvimento; A Mulher como actor fundamental para o desenvolvimento socio-economico e promocao da paz; Imperio de Kansala e mobilidade fronteirica das populacoes e na promocao da paz; A saude dos jovens: SIDA, Droga e Saude Reprodutiva, etc. Foi criado infraestruturas economicas e sociais, construindo 5 armazens para stokagem das mercadorias nao vendidas da feira transfronteirico de Sabado, 25 bungalows utilizados para encontro dos jovens e conhecido por Sinham Macaria e visitado por ONGs internacionais. Tem fonte, gerador de 25 KVA, escola comunitaria e criou-se uma associacao dos filhos de Cambadju que ja estao a beneficiar de formacao na sub-regiao. Este Festival Internacional para Paz e Integracao Sub-regional, provou que nao existia fronteiras. A CEDEAO institucionalizou o Festival e vai realizado novamente em Cambadju neste ano de 2006.

c) A Sociedade Civil Guineense tem assumido um papel de relevo nos momentos mais dificeis do pais, principalmente as mulheres. Houve encontros com o Presidente Koumba Iala, pedindo que assumisse o seu verdadeiro papel de pai da nacao e tambem com ECOSOC e Conselho de Seguranca das Nacoes Unidas, referente a desolucao da Assembleia pelo Presidente Koumba Iala em finais de 2002, o nao pagamento dos salarios ao funcionarios durante mais que 11 meses, adiamente sucessivo de eleicoes, dando a conhecer a situacao dificil do pais a um dos Ambassadors da ECOSOC com a seguinte mensagem: "The situation in the country is getting worst and worst. People are dying because of deepening poverty. No nutrition, medication, public school and money circulating. Those who have the minimum income are dying also of heart attacks, high blood pressure due to family support problems. We're being drawn back to the ghetto of poverty. It's urgent that the international community provide the minimum support to national and international NGOs the based support, training and orientation to tackle this poverty of all kind – political, economic and social". E a resposta dele foi: "It is sad to hear that the already bad situation is further deteriorating. It should be different in a country with the potential of Guinea-Bissau. The international community is certainly willing to assist Guinea-Bissau, but at the same time the President should be willing to meet some minimum standards of good governance (such as separation of powers between executive, judiciary and legislative; or an agreement on how he wants to attack poverty), and some minimum signs of democratic inclination (no harassment of opposition and of the media; a clear indication that he will guarantee free and fair elections). The point is that no such signs are coming forward, it seems that the President is mainly interested in his own political survival and that, unfortunately, makes the international community very reluctant to provide funds. The international community is not against this President, but certainly has problems with is actions. In case of serious humanitarian needs, assistance can always be made available, whatever the political situation, through UNICEF, NGO's and others, but I guess that preference will be to channel those funds through other channels than the government".

d) A 14 de Setembro de 2003, instala-se a crise, os militares assumem o poder. Tensao com o encontro com politicos e a missao da Uniao Africana , a CEDEAO e dos politicos que levou o Representante na altura do PNUD a convidar elemento da sociedade civil para mediar a situacao. A mediacao conseguiu ter sucesso devido a uma pergunta dirigida ao politicos: "o papel que assumiram durante os 11 meses de conflito politico-militar, onde estavam?" Esta estrategia desarmou os politicos e motivou a delegacao da CEDEAO a fazer vir de imediato os tres presidentes: Obasanjo, Kufor e Wade. Conseguiu-se a assinatura da carta de resignacao pelo Kumba Iala, criou-se o Conselho Nacional de Transicao e foi nomeado o Presidente da Republica de Transicao resultantes da proposta da Sociedade Civil e os militares a nomeacao do Primeiro Ministro;

e) Nas eleições legislativas de 2004, fez-se um trabalho sério antes, durante e depois das eleições.

Preparação pre-eleitoral: as mulheres juntamente com os homens vestidos de mulheres, lançaram uma campanha para eleições livre de violência e intimidações a 8 de Março. Conseguiram 100,000 "Assinaturas para Paz" a nível nacional, entre as quais constavam assinaturas do ex-Presidente da República Henrique Pereira Rosa e o falecido General Veríssimo Correia Seabra. Passou-se a mensagem "Eleições Pacíficas" com demonstrações públicas, dícticos e via rádios.

No dia das eleições: verificou-se um atraso importante no processo de distribuição das urnas, causando a ira dos eleitores. Grupos de eleitores de três bairros de Bissau levantaram barricadas na estrada com paus, pedras e pneus, o que levou a intervenção de elementos da Brigada de Intervenção Rápida, afectos à Polícia de Ordem Pública, com espingardas metralhadoras AK-M e lança-granadas de gás lacrimogénico. Contudo, das confrontações não resultaram quaisquer vítimas por uma das activistas a sociedade civil, Macaria Barai, estar presente e conseguir persuadir as forças de intervenção a manter o sangue frio, não atirar ou apreender quem quer que seja. Depois de muitas exaltações entre a força e os populares e a mediação da Macaria, o próprio Comissário Geral da POP, acabou por ordenar calma aos seus homens que, de imediato, abandonaram o local e os populares retiraram as barricadas e fim ao distúrbio. Ao mesmo tempo, as urnas em falta acabaram de chegar às mesas de eleições. O atraso no início da votação, estendeu o período da votação até à noite e o dia seguinte. As mulheres deram alimentação e refrescos e permitiram a participação pacífica no processo eleitoral.

Pos-Eleição: as anomalias verificadas no dia das eleições levaram à contestação dos resultados pelo que estava no poder. Outras vezes houve reuniões de reflexão no seio da sociedade civil, em especial as mulheres e a Macaria e a Dra. Cadi Seidi, médica e tenente coronel, foram designadas a mediar a situação. Contactos foram estabelecidos com líderes de partidos políticos, militares e presidente da CNE. As pessoas já estavam a refugiar com medo de uma nova guerra. Após assegurar a garantia dos líderes de que iam aceitar os resultados pronunciados pela CNE pelo bem da nação e que não haveria nenhum tiro, as mulheres reuniram-se de novo e foram todas à rádio informar que o parto foi difícil, mas a criança nasceu e era preciso que todos se juntem para curar o bico da criança. Imediatamente depois dos resultados oficiais foram divulgados sem problema ou contestação.

f) A 6 de Outubro de 2004, quando uma tentativa de golpe de Estado decapitou a cúpula das Forças Armadas, as mulheres fizeram uma marcha, a luz da vela, para exigir o fim da violência.

g) Nas eleições presidenciais de 2005, considerando a tensão que se vivia com as possíveis recandidaturas dos ex-Presidentes, General João Bernardo Vieira e Koumba Iala, nasceu uma iniciativa de cidadãos de boa vontade, iniciativa essa prontamente abraçada por um grande número de organizações da sociedade civil. A iniciativa visava contribuir para a criação de um clima de paz e estabilidade. Foi elaborado "Compromisso Pre-Eleitoral", uma espécie de pacto de entendimento e engajamento entre todos os candidatos às eleições. O compromisso pretendido era que: - os candidatos aceitassem a decisão do Supremo Tribunal da Justiça quanto às candidaturas às eleições presidenciais; - a campanha eleitoral decorra num clima de paz, fair play e respeito pela dignidade humana, evitando o uso de palavras e termos que são contra a moralidade, dignidade e respeito pelos direitos da pessoa humana; e os resultados finais das eleições sejam respeitados e assumidos por todos. Todos assinaram o compromisso excepto o ex-Presidente Koumba Iala e um outro candidato. O documento foi largamente divulgado nos meios de comunicação social e como instrumento da educação cívica.

A sociedade civil criou brigadas de PAZ nas primeiras e segundas voltas das eleições, como a lei não permitia que os nacionais fossem observadores. Muitos distúrbios foram impedidos com a presença das brigadas.

II. DIFICULDADES ENFRENTADAS

- Devidas e medo para aderir a uma causa;
- Com pobreza, umas participam por interesse de ganhar o sustento
- Despesas financeiras e trabalhos duros recaem sobre um determinado grupo;
- Comunicacao social nao ajudam muito;
- Lideres de partidos tem medo dos activistas virem a assumir o poder
- Condenados e criticados
- Riscos de vida
- Bloqueios na vida e actividades pessoais
- Difamacoes infundadas

III. COMO E QUE ESSAS DIFICULDADES FORAM ULTRAPASSADAS

- Visao clara;
- Dominio da causa e ter argumentos fortes e claras
- Ter minimo de meios financeiros, transportes e comunicacao proprios
- Disponibilizar todo o tempo possivel enquanto nao atingir os objectivos visados;
- Tornar incansavel;
- Dar mais que receber
- Saber ouvir e ter mais que uma alternativa dependendo do contexto e pessoa;
- Nada de raivas
- Nada de fome
- Coragosa e preparar para qualquer risco
- Aceitar ser confidentes das pessoas
- Manter maior sigilo no processo de negociacao.

IV. LICOES A TIRAR

- Questoes economicas;
- Desprezo de uma classe
- Corrupcao
- Conflitos para enriquecer
- Falta de dialogo
- Ser mae para todos e mostrar que estais a defender o seu interesse
- Inclusao
- Ter as qualidades de bom lider
- Defender o interesse de todos – querer o bem-estar geral de todos
- Nao condenar e saber apresentar o custo do problema

EXPERIENCES IN COTE D'IVOIRE

- by Mrs Salimata Porquet,
Président of the Organisation des Femmes d'Eburnie pour la Paix (OFEP) and Forum international des Femmes pour la Paix, l'Égalité et le Développement (FIFEM)**
- by Maître Françoise KAUDJHIS-OFFOUMOU, Barrister-at-law, Bar Association of Côte d'Ivoire Expert – Consultant Founding President of AID-Afrique (Association Internationale pour la Démocratie)**

First Part:

INTRODUCTION

Africa has witnessed, and is still witnessing, all sorts of conflict (internal, intra-State). These crises, rooted in political, economic, social or military causes, have serious consequences for Africa that is already suffering from its poverty and HIV/AIDS, hatred, division, violence, famine, exodus, etc..

In view of these crises, traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution have shown their deficiencies. The international community is doing its utmost best, but often intervenes like a firefighter who arrives when the fire has already assumed in measurable proportions. Indeed, the international community is sometimes considered as the cause of the fire.

UN has created a conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanism, which has not always operated well, for lack of resources, even though in recent years it has been closely involved in the crises in Côte d'Ivoire, and then in Chad.

ECOWAS has adopted measures and provisions for conflict management. Despite all these measures, conflicts have continued to develop in the Region: the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo, etc; now Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, and whose turn will it be tomorrow?

We can therefore note the failure of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, and in particular the insignificant presence, or even absence, of women in the decision making process and at negotiation tables. For example, in Lomé, during the search for a solution to the Ivorian Crisis, there was only one woman at the Negotiation Table.

In the delegation to MARCOUSSIS, there was no woman among the signatories to the agreements, even though there were a few women in some delegations. However, a number of NGOs, including OFEP, were present in Paris, outside the Marcoussis negotiations.

In the first Government of Reconciliation, there were 6 women out of 40 Ministers. In the current Government, there are 4 women out of 32 ministers. Therefore, we have good reason to reflect on women's participation in conflict prevention and management through incorporation of the Gender perspective into the peace process.

How can women contribute to conflict prevention?

To answer this question, we need to consider the reasons for their participation, and the strategies that would enable them to contribute effectively to the process.

I. REASONS FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

The reasons are socio-cultural and legal.

A. SOCIO-CULTURAL REASONS

These reasons concern women's status, African traditions and the fact that women and children are the greatest victims of wars.

1. Women's Status

Women, considered as an "integrating force" unlike men who are considered as a "disintegrating force", are naturally predisposed to play a regulating role in society.

Indeed, a woman, who is mother of several children with different characters and personalities, learns to love all of them and tell them the truth, since she is familiar with the right to difference and can make concessions to her spouse, and is therefore tolerant. Women need to be present in all discussions for peace and pardon, and in particular, demonstrate tolerance to prevent any conflict.

These talents therefore arise from her triple position as mother, spouse and citizen.

2. African Traditions

In African societies, women play a key role.

In pre-colonial societies, in times of war, women exercised a humanitarian right; they created alliances and fostered peace.

In colonial societies, women in the struggle for the independence of Côte d'Ivoire, contributed to liberation movements. For example, they organized a demonstration to Grand-Bassam in 1947, to free their husbands, children, brothers or fathers; they also organized the markets' strike.

In the 1990s, women led the struggle against discrimination and all types of violence. They contributed immensely to the struggle for democratization by militating in a number of NGOs and women's associations; the struggle led to effective introduction of the multi-party system on 30 April 1990.

Nowadays, under OFEP, women were the first to go to the besieged zone in Bouaké in January 2003 to talk to the then rebels, who became "Les Forces Nouvelles" (The New Forces), so as to find solutions for peace.

3. Women, the great victims of conflicts:

Women are easy targets in armed conflicts. They are the main victims of violations of basic human rights leading to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (rape, harassment resulting sometimes in unwanted pregnancies, and cases of HIV/AIDS or sexually transmitted infections).

Who could have imagined that Côte d'Ivoire, formerly the haven of peace, would be cut into two since the war started on 19/09/2002?

Women and girls have been killed, raped, and wounded, and displaced from their environment to other countries as refugees. Many women have lost their husbands, families, children, businesses and sources of income. The social, health, school and administrative infrastructure has been destroyed. It is essential for women to have a say, a say equal to that of men, in negotiating peace and preventing future conflicts.

B - LEGAL REASONS

1) Universal Instruments

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 provides that all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity. Article 1 of Resolution No. 1325 of the United Nations Security Council urged member States to immediately ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. This resolution therefore addresses the impact of war on women, and women's involvement in conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

a) Official Records of Conferences:

Practically all the declarations of international conferences on women, from Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, to New York 2000 and particularly Beijing 1995, have laid emphasis on women's role in the peace process, equality and development.

b) International Conventions:

The convention on the political rights of women in 1952, the international pact of civil and political rights in 1966, the international pact relating to economic and social rights in 1966; all the conventions relating to human rights, particularly the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1979, and the 1991 Declaration on the elimination of violence against women, place the role of women in the peace process.

2) Regional Instruments

a) Official Records of Regional Fora:

African regional conferences, and mainly those of Dakar in 1994 and Addis-Ababa in 1999, attached great importance to women's participation in the peace process in the various themes of the said conferences.

b) The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1986 and its protocol on women's rights in Africa on 11 July 2003, address women's participation in conflict management.

II - STRATEGIES

To enable women to participate in the prevention and resolution of crises that underlie in Africa, general and specific strategies need to be developed.

A - GENERAL STRATEGIES:

1 - Gender equality is a prerequisite for women's participation in conflict resolution. It is therefore necessary to analyze the implementation of the quota principle and envisage a law on gender equality and parity.

2 - Sensitization on women's rights, through information, education, communication and training of all people at all levels for a change in behaviour.

3 - Empowerment of women in all fields, so that they can have more assurance and confidence in themselves and effectively participate in decision-making, because they constitute a force for change, as well as an indicator and criterion of development.

B - SPECIFIC STRATEGIES:

These strategies are intended to confer a direct role on women in conflict prevention and management, and call for mediation and reconciliation actions in conflict management and resolution, as well as concrete actions for the post-conflict period.

1 - This entails the implementation of Resolution 1325 of October 2000 and the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa in July 2003, as well as the implementation of national and regional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, declarations or other instruments relating to violence to women and in particular sexual violence, which has become a war weapon.

2 - Mediation

- Women should be involved in all initiatives towards conflict resolution and maintenance of peace;

- Their presence should be reinforced in the authorized organs of ECOWAS, AU or UNO, and around negotiation tables;

- Women should participate in mediations and good offices;

- Women should participate at par in the drafting, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of Peace Agreements to identify the causes and consequences of conflicts according to gender (determine their impact on Women, Girls and Boys).

C O N C L U S I O N

To ensure effective participation of women in the peace process, it is necessary to:

1 - Appoint women to all political, military and diplomatic decision-making organs. The discretionary power of the Head of State should increasingly be exercised to this end, depending on the competence of the women, taking into account field investigations and observation, so as to avoid nepotism and the promotion of mediocrity or inefficiency.

2 - Involve women in humanitarian actions:

Women should participate in different humanitarian actions because they and their children are the first to become war refugees and displaced victims.

In short, it is necessary to invest in women, in all aspects of society and particularly in the search for and maintenance of peace, so as to give a chance to Africa in general, and, in particular, to Côte d'Ivoire which needs pardon to make its enemies its friends and manage the post-war period by the grace of God.

3 - Actions in post-war management:

After the war, the reconstruction of national unity and the economy, the restoration of the authority of the State, and the management of the social consequences of war are some of the challenges to be met. We need to make every effort to avoid the specter of civil war.

To that end, women should conduct sensitization campaigns on creating understanding between communities living in Côte d'Ivoire.

It is necessary to put in place mechanisms to protect and preserve the physical security of women and children against all sorts of violence.

Female teachers should teach civic education and democracy programmes focused on tolerance, peace and security to prevent conflicts.

Opinion leaders and community authorities, local Administrative Authorities, and foreign communities living in Côte d'Ivoire should make their own contributions.

Efforts should be made to restore inter-ethnic and religious dialogue, while respecting the principle of secularity of the State.

The media should be called to order in case of excesses and mistakes relating to gender;

It is evident that the post-war period will be one of questioning:

- ◆ *How can the investigations on assassinations and general amnesty be reconciled?*
- ◆ *How can the loss suffered by victims or their rightful claimants be compensated?*
- ◆ *Will displaced civil servants accept to go back to their stations?*
- ◆ *How will public order be restored and the Administration resume its activities in the besieged zones and economy in distress?*
- ◆ *How can mutual trust be rekindled in the people?*
- ◆ *How can national solidarity be reinforced to enable displaced women without resources to survive?*

- ◆ *How can they find jobs?*
- ◆ *How can the New Forces be disarmed, and the Loyal Forces on the war front be made to return to the barracks? Redeploy security forces throughout the country? Create a republican army?*
- ◆ *How can the armed private militias be convinced to disarm and return to their families?*
- ◆ *How can their reintegration be ensured by finding jobs for them? (their management by the DDR?)*
- ◆ *How can the child soldiers be re-educated for reintegration into society?*
- ◆ *What can be done to ensure the integrity of the territory, the Unity and indivisibility of the Nation? to ensure social cohesion?*

The work to be done to achieve pardon and reconciliation will be very difficult, and to achieve this goal, each of us will have to accept to have some remorse because we are all responsible in varying degrees, and accept to bring about peace by cultivating the culture of peace.

It is at this price that each woman, each African intellectual, through their contribution to the answers to these questions, will meet the challenges for Sustainable Human Development in Côte d'Ivoire in particular, and in other West African countries in crisis.

Second part:

W o m e n and Endogenous Governance in W est A f r i c a

African States in general, and those in West Africa, in particular, implemented reform programmes from 1979 to 1989. The objective of these programmes was to ensure Sustainable Human Development, by training citizens in the sound management of public affairs.

It was therefore in 1989, during the crisis of authority and political order in Africa with adverse effects on economic development and disturbing development actors, that the concept of Governance was explored.

I. THE CONCEPT

Good Governance was required to create a structure, a legal framework within which policies would be formulated and adopted to inspire confidence in economic and social partners.

Governance may be defined as: the impartial, transparent, conscious, organized and accountable management of public affairs, through the creation of structures of a system (a series of rules) accepted as legitimate authority, so as to promote and upgrade social values sought by individuals and groups to reinforce legitimacy in public and private affairs.

Governance is therefore a process which focuses on voluntary acceptance by the governed to submit to the management of public affairs. This definition was given at the First National State Inspection Colloquium on Governance in Côte d'Ivoire, held in Yamoussoukro from 4 to 6 February 1999. This definition was adopted by the AID-Afrique International Seminar on "Challenges to Good Governance in Justice, the Economy and Communication" held in Abidjan from 11 to 13 February 1999.

Governance goes beyond the Government and State institutions. The notion helps us to understand the need to reinforce State capacities and sanction violations of established rules. The regime, or legitimate authority, is not only made up of political actors, but also of basic rules. Consequently, we can find the degree of civic spirit demonstrated by public or semi-public officials and their manner of involving all development actors, with all confidence, at the level of the State or civil society in general, and women and women's organizations, in particular. It is the rules which motivate individuals and make them contribute actively to public causes, and generate social capital for progress.

Governance is a particularly advanced form of democracy, because Democracy is oriented towards the result of Good Governance with the following indicators:

- The legitimacy of authority;
- Public sensitivity;
- Public accountability before an independent and non-corruptible legal system ;
- Access to adequate information for free communication ;
- Efficiency and transparency in public and private management and fight against corruption ;
- Acceptance of other public or private actors through participation .

Endogenous Governance is one that is internal to the process, within the process, and produced by the said process. This endogenous governance would not be real if West African women are not integrated into the development process.

II - INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO THE ENDOGENOUS GOVERNANCE PROCESS

It is well known that underdevelopment and misery in Africa are caused by the political conditions and management of public affairs. Women should no longer merely wait for "saviours". They should, in addition to seeking the satisfaction of their practical needs, fight for consideration of strategic needs, while accepting, if necessary, to face the difficulties their integration into the process may cause.

This is because while women can exist without democracy or endogenous good governance, democracy or endogenous good governance cannot exist without the participation of women.

Endogenous governance should first be a day-to-day attitude, experienced like democracy. For example, the manner in which a husband treats his wife or the way in which an employer treats his female collaborators, the manner of managing his household or his enterprise shows his culture of endogenous good governance.

In endogenous governance, women's organizations should play a role in mobilizing and sensitizing grassroots communities by acting as links in communicating social demands to policy-makers. It is by playing this role that they can effectively contribute to the prevention and resolution of crises, given the widespread failure of political forces in preparing compromise on the rules of political competition and in playing their respective roles in the management of public affairs.

But how can women be integrated into the endogenous governance process?

Endogenous Governance requires authority, reciprocity, confidence and accountability in public, semi-public or private affairs in order to achieve economic and social progress.

Confidence eliminates tensions arising from ethnicism, fundamentalism, exaggerated nationalism, social exclusion, and racism. Confidence facilitates healthy cooperation.

Reciprocity, which means social interaction between political actors, creates consensual rules.

Accountability reinforces confidence.

Women should judge the effectiveness of political decisions only in terms of the solutions given to their problems and how the solutions are implemented. If the solutions are imposed without their participation as beneficiaries, they will not feel involved. Consequently, to integrate them into the process, confidence should be cultivated through participation and communication.

Women's participation is a fundamental human right aimed at enabling women to exercise greater control over resources and inevitable sharing for alternation as they wish to take charge of their own destiny and improve their living conditions.

Consequently, women should participate in project implementation, from the formulation to the monitoring-evaluation of these projects, which can change their lives. It is in this way that they can influence policies and programmes.

Women should be informed of decisions taken by elected officers, so that they can make their observations where necessary, and avoid social exclusion, which promotes resistance or boycott.

Furthermore, women could be consulted by the political or administrative authority who intends to solve a problem.

In this case, women should be capable of analyzing their needs and propose solutions to their problems, through familiarity with the ins and outs of these solutions; this encourages political authorities to listen to women.

The framework of a predefined and accepted consultation in endogenous governance is different from the lodging of complaints and grievances. Women's participation can come as a result of their approval of a decision or programme.

They can obtain delegation of authority to implement certain programmes. For example, road maintenance could be delegated to a women's organization.

Lastly, a women's organization can collaborate with the administrative or political authority. The participation strategy relies on communication, which should be effective. The effectiveness arises from clear and useful information transmitted to the populations by the administrative or political authority.

The identification of needs, programmes and the definition of priorities, the search for budget, and monitoring-evaluation should be done with women to whom the rules and procedures of management and functioning of public services should be explained.

Women's organizations, a cog in the machine, will facilitate endogenous governance by taking into account, in their communication strategy, of:

- The nature women's needs and priorities;
- The level of literacy and training to participate in negotiations, analyze their situation, find the cause and look for the solution in their interest, fighting against corruption at all levels;
- The implementation of gender: equality between women and men, the poor and the rich, and their roles and social, economic and cultural relations;
- The creation of local, national and international networks to ensure coherence of development strategies;

- The use of appropriate media;
- An understanding of the aim of participation by women and political or administrative authorities so that no one is ignorant of their rights and duties, and should express them and exercise them freely;
- The strengthening of women's capacities to facilitate their participation in planning and formulation of policies;
- Consensual legal and institutional reforms around compromise so that each party can accept it voluntarily with the obligation to account for their acts and gestures.

C O N C L U S I O N

Women are dynamic actors who act with efficacy, credibility and determination on the field. They contribute to a new distribution of political influence, and therefore to endogenous governance.

Regrouped within an NGO, women's participation ceases to be guilty and leads to their contribution to the training of a more transparent society in which monopolies are out of place and favour the multiplication of social actors.

Consequently, there should be accountability and gender equality for parity to be more favourably received among women and the young generations. It is within this context that women in West Africa can play a key role in the promotion and control of implementation of decisions of national interest.

West African States, to succeed in their mission, should instill a culture of endogenous governance in the behaviour of their leaders, as well as in the actions of political and administrative authorities. Endogenous governance requires acceptance of women's participation, which helps to mobilize resources at all levels and inspire confidence so as to achieve sustainable human development.