



AAWORD

Association of African Women for Research and Development

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STATEMENT* ISSUED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INFORMAL INTERACTIVE HEARINGS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN PREPARATION FOR THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (New York, 1 April 2011)

***Mr. Chairman of the General Assembly,
Secretary General of the Conference,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Civil Society Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

On behalf of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), I would like to express our gratitude to you, for giving us the opportunity to share the views and concerns of Civil Society Organizations, particularly of African women, at the opening of the second preparatory committee meeting for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as this meeting is being held, men and women of the 33 Least Developed Countries in Africa are living at the pace of the world crisis characterized by economic, food, environmental, social and political crises, which not only continue but are also worsening every day. We would like to reiterate here our analysis that those crises are not isolated but are the expression of the crisis of the neoliberal and capitalist model characterized by the overexploitation of labour and the environment and the financial speculation to the detriment of the real economy. We, African Women, still object to this model of production and consumption built on capital accumulation that generates a growing poverty for our people and especially for women.

After 20 years of chaotic structural adjustment programmes in Africa, marked by an increased lack of any responsibility of African States and a privatization of social sectors such as education and health, new poverty reduction strategies were introduced from the year 2000. They have become today the reference framework of development policies in many African countries. Despite initiatives at country level to make the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) development more participatory, AAWORD studies show that participation in the development of PRSPs does not necessarily lead to the integration of gender-related concerns into the final document or the implementation of the final findings at the level of the targeted populations, particularly girls and women.

We, African women, need to move forward in building alternatives to those recurrent crises, as palliative responses based on the market logic do not suit us. To ensure sustainable development in

LDCs in Africa, we need to find new ground rules based on a new social contract that places the visible and industrious hands of citizens, men and women, at the heart of development policies. To do so, we call for an investment in human capital, without exclusion. Commitments taken in the framework of the 4th Action Plan which will be adopted in Istanbul need to be translated into reality by creating infrastructures and opportunities for women in public policy.

Indeed, if there is one area in which concrete actions should be undertaken, it is in the education and training of girls and women in Africa in order to reduce poverty, maternal and infant mortality and also to promote economic growth, access to land, capital and market in agriculture sector, resistance to domination of all sorts and strengthen human development.

That is the reason why we call for :

- the 4th Action Plan to set up a special fund aimed at increasing knowledge of African women in scientific and technical fields, particularly in the agricultural sector which polarizes women's productive force, by providing them access to agricultural knowledge, science and technology in order for them to benefit from extension services, agricultural input programmes, technologies and innovative agricultural research;

- more investment in child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS and opportunistic diseases that affect women in order to not only reduce mortality but also the burden of care they bring to ill people and orphans so that they can fully take part in the development process;

- LDCs' economic, political and cultural sovereignty to be respected so that the African genius can be released and help African women and men to think their own development

- the odious and illegitimate debts to be cancelled and a civic audit be done to enable the populations of the LDCs to seek compensation through education programmes focused on the rebuilding of the cultural identity of the women and men learners and linking school to the community life;

- gender to be integrated in the 4th Action Plan and an audit be carried out throughout the decade in order to adjust the disparities and have gender disaggregated data to measure human development indicators in LDCs;

- multilateral and bilateral agreements that are in favour of policies and programs for competence transfer, the strengthening of the South-South cooperation, the creation of more formal and decent employment creation within African economies, be strengthened from a gender perspective.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION

Done in New-York on April 1st 2011
By the Association of African Women for Research and Development
(AAWORD)

* AAWORD is a network of women researchers and activists intervening in 22 African countries and the diaspora (Cameroon, Chad, Cape-Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, USA, Zambia, Zimbabwe).