

SOLIDARITY FOR  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

A force for freedom



MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ  
POUR LES DROITS  
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES

Une force pour la liberté

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### **African Leaders must translate shared values on gender equality into action**

As the African Heads of State and Government meet during the 16<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, under the theme- "***Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values***", the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition congratulates the African Union for elaborating a comprehensive framework on gender equality and women's empowerment as a shared value. The framework includes but is not limited to: the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) and the declaration of 2010-2020 the Decade for African Women.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are central pillars for people-centred and sustainable integration of our continent. *'However, African women continue to experience egregious violations of their rights as demonstrated by the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, widespread violence against women, low levels of participation in decision-making, lack of access to and control over land and natural resources, and high rates of maternal mortality'*, observes Hannah Forster of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies.

As African Union member states deliberate on the theme of the Summit, we urge them to translate shared values on gender equality into action at national and local levels.

As Naisola Likimani of FEMNET states, *'I commend the 29 countries that have already ratified the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women; all members states should fulfil their commitment in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa to ensure universal ratification of the Protocol in 2011 and urgently develop multi-sectoral action plans for its full implementation during the African Women's Decade 2010-2020'*.

Brenda Kombo of Equality Now adds that *'The African Union has a comprehensive set of shared values on gender equality and women's rights. What African women need is action on commitments made by their leaders at the national level to protect, promote and fulfil women's rights. African Union member states have an obligation to set aside adequate resources to implement their commitments on gender equality and to monitor progress to enhance their accountability to the women of Africa'*.

#### **Notes to Editors**

The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition is a regional network made up of 37 national, regional and international Civil Society Organisations working towards the promotion and protection of women's human rights in Africa. Since its inauguration in 2004 SOAWR's main area of focus has been to compel African states to urgently sign, ratify, domesticate and fully implement the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ('the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women').

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