

Conclusions

Women's Preparatory Conference

The Sudan Consortium
Oslo, May 5-7, 2008

We are a coalition of diverse women's groups from across Sudan. Over the past three days we reviewed progress addressing women's priorities and needs in peace building and reconstruction following the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Our analysis was based on a reassessment of the Oslo Priorities for women developed in conjunction with the 2005 Oslo Donors Conference.

We acknowledge important progress including the constitutional guarantee of equality before the law as well as the recognition in the CPA of the need for positive discrimination for women and the importance of recognising women's equal rights. We further note the importance of the Government of Southern Sudan's constitutional guarantee of 25% women's participation in government, and urge passage of an electoral law that maintains the 25% minimum guarantee of women's elected representation in the legislature as foreseen in the draft law.

Progress in meeting the Oslo priorities for women identified in the 2005 Oslo Donors Consortium has been slow. We would like to reaffirm the urgency and continued relevance of each of those priorities. We are particularly concerned about the persistence of extremely poor human development indicators in relation to women and girls' literacy, maternal mortality, productive asset security, economic and political empowerment, and protection from gender-based violence. There are several gaps in aid performance from a gender equality perspective:

- Resources for women's empowerment and gender equality remain very limited. There is a need for dedicated gender equality expertise in major peace and development trust funds, and for gender-sensitive indicators on the performance of aid;
- Mechanisms to promote women's rights such as the relevant national ministries do not have sufficient resources or influence in decision-making forums;
- Women's real access to justice is limited by significant capacity constraints in the judicial sector and the absence of reform of Family Law and adequate criminal law provisions for addressing violence against women. Legal reforms must be accelerated to bring judicial processes in line with constitutional equality provisions, including laws of particular relevance to women;
- Women are not given the opportunity to lead and to own peace building and development. They are insufficiently represented on the oversight committees of trust funds, and on all commissions overseeing the implementation of the CPA and the peace negotiations in Darfur.

We believe that attention and major strategic investments are needed to address these challenges:

1. **Fast-track efforts** to address the most severe aspects of discrimination against women and girls, notably achievement of the Millennium Development Goals' targets related to women and girls' human capital development (education, maternal mortality) and reduction of gender-based violence.
2. **Prioritize women's leadership** and access to all decision-making forums and processes regarding peace building, recovery, and development, through endorsement and realization of a 25% quota for women in public office, on commissions overseeing peace building, and negotiating peace in Darfur and elsewhere.
3. **Enhance cooperation between government and women's civil society organisations**, particularly by engaging women's civil society groups in oversight to review resource allocation for peace building and development.
4. **Increase government and donor accountability to women** by improving information available on the flow of national and international resources, and creating a multi-stakeholder body to monitor allocations and their impact on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Women make essential contributions to peace building, recovery and development. We call upon all stakeholders – donors, the GoNU and the GoSS, and women's civil society organizations— to support women's rights and empowerment. The moment to invest in women is now. Let us not lose this opportunity.

Annex to the Conclusions
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Four priority areas: Strategies for strategic investment and programming

- 1. Fast-track efforts to address areas in which women's most serious human development deficits are concentrated:**
 - a) Increase the percentage of funds dedicated to achieving the Sudan's Millennium Development Goals' targets most crucial to women's empowerment and gender equality—education and literacy, maternal mortality and reproductive health as well as livelihood security
 - b) Make key investments to guarantee women's security and prevent sexual and gender-based violence, such as women's desks in police stations and access to justice

- 2. Prioritize women's leadership:**
 - a) Ensure minimum 25% representation of women at all levels of the GNU and the GoSS. Guarantee this in the Elections Law, Political Party laws and by-laws, and in the post-election constitution of Sudan
 - b) Fund programmes to strengthen women as candidates and voters so they engage in the electoral process and hold representatives accountable
 - c) Convene a regional symposium in early 2009 that draws on African experiences to develop a support plan for elections and to define next steps

- 3. Enhance cooperation between government and women's civil society organizations:**
 - a) Amend existing Voluntary Act to enable women's civil society groups greater operating autonomy
 - b) Ensure that at least 15% of the funds for peace, recovery and development, including trust funds, are allocated for women's empowerment and gender equality, while mainstreaming gender equality issues through all other development investments
 - c) Guarantee participation by representatives of women's organizations in administration of trust funds and national budget oversight

- 4. Increase Government and donor accountability to women:**
 - a) Mandate that all future reporting to the Sudan donor consortium and other bodies assesses the impact of public spending on women's empowerment and gender equality. Complement reporting with sessions focused on women's empowerment and gender equality and ensure 25% women's participation in donor conferences.
 - b) Improve national results reporting on spending for women's empowerment and gender equality:
 - i. Create a multi-stakeholder monitoring body to track the extent to which governments' and donors' commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality are met with resource allocation and actual spending
 - ii. Create shared gender indicators for donors, the GNU and the GoSS
 - iii. Engage the National Ministry of Finance with the ministries responsible for women to institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting across government budget processes
 - iv. Widely disseminate information about results publicly to enhance transparency
 - c) Produce independent evaluations of the impact of donor, GNU and GoSS spending on women and gender equality for public release prior to the next donor meeting and regularly thereafter.
 - d) Create a national anti-corruption commission to build transparency in use of national resources, including aid. Guarantee 25% women on this commission.
 - e) Fund a shadow reporting process by civil society to monitor fulfillment of commitments to meeting women's priorities, advancing women's empowerment, and engendering the peace building process.