



PRESS RELEASE

United Nations - Office of the Special Adviser on Africa OSAA

Promoting International Support for Peace and Development in Africa

Expert Group Meeting on Democratic Governance in Africa: Strategies for Greater Participation of Women”, Arusha, Tanzania

6 - 8 December 2005

The UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is convening an Expert Group Meeting on “Democratic Governance in Africa: Strategies for Greater Participation of Women”, to be held in Arusha, Tanzania from 6 to 8 December 2005.

One of the key objectives of the Expert Group Meeting is to analyze the progress and impediments to achieving gender equality in the political process in selected African countries, including post-conflict countries.

Speakers

Speakers will include the Vice President of the National Assembly of Burundi, Onésime Nduwimana, the Executive Director & Founder of Femmes Africa Solidarité, Bineta Diop, African broadcast producer, Janet Narh, Living Section editor of The Guardian, Gbemisola Olujobi, President of the University of Liberia, Al-Hassan Conteh and Secretary-General of the SWAPO Women’s Council of Namibia Eunice Ipinge, among others.

In all, the Expert Group Meeting will be attended by 20 experts drawn from a variety of fields, including Ministers and Members of Parliaments, policy-makers, representatives of political parties, non-governmental organizations, academicians, the media and organizations of the United Nations system.

NEPAD

The promotion of democratic governance and the empowerment of women are key priorities of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), whose programme activities are supported by the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.

Throughout the world women continue to face obstacles to their participation in politics. These barriers are found in prevailing social and economic regimes, as well as in existing political structures. Women’s increased involvement in the democratic process is essential to broadening and deepening societal commitment to democratic governance. The appointment of women to decision-making positions in the executive branch and the

election of more female representatives to parliaments would result in a more balanced gender perspective in the national decision-making processes.

In this regard, NEPAD plays an important part. One of its long-term objectives is to promote the role of women in all activities. Currently, as a programme of the African Union, NEPAD promotes the full and effective integration of women in political and socio-economic development. Through its Democracy and Governance Initiative, NEPAD aims to strengthen the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in participating countries.

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa has acted as the focal point for advocacy at the global level for NEPAD programmes and policies. (www.un.org/africa/osaa)

Issues

Some of the specific issues to be addressed by the participants at the meeting include:

- Evaluation of specific factors which facilitate the participation of women in transitional and new governments and the identification of measures to involve women in the political process, with particular emphasis on peace-building and reconstruction phases
- Identification of practical measures to be undertaken by governments, donors, the international community, civil society and other stakeholders to support and generate political will and firm commitment to promote the advancement of women and the goals of gender equality;
- Assessment of women's participation in political decision-making at the local level (i.e. implementation of pro-active gender parity policies, such as quotas for women in local governments) as a springboard to greater involvement at the national level;
- Encouragement of grassroots involvement and growth of independent women's organizations (i.e. lobbying for constitutional and legislative reforms).
- Role of the media in fostering unity, inclusion and supporting greater participation of women in the democratic process.

Outcome

Based on lessons learned, the meeting will also develop a set of action-oriented recommendations to advance women's participation in the political process at all levels, while promoting dialogue between people in government, academicians, media and other experts to address systemic problems.

For further information please contact:

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