



**High Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward"  
22 September 2008**

**Summary Report  
Side Events**

**Title: Africa Women's Forum**

**Date and Venue: September 22, 2008, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., Conference Room 3**

**Organizers (LEAD): UNIFEM**

**Chair (s): Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director – Programs, UNIFEM HQ  
Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Special Advisor of Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women**

**1. Introduction:**

Many African women and their communities are worse off today than they were a decade ago — in spite of the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent inter-governmental commitments made at international conferences or ratifications of United Nations and African Union conventions and declarations by Member States. Serious and persistent obstacles such as chronic poverty, the continued inter-generational cycle of violence and abusive practices, the lack of equal access to health, especially reproductive health services and HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment, education, training and employment, as well as the impact of armed conflict and natural disasters continue to undermine the advancement of women and their participation in decision-making processes.

While political commitment towards gender equality and women's empowerment is high in Africa, with the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Heads of State's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, a recent UN ECA report found that the performance of African governments is poor when it comes to the implementation of these commitments.

The Africa Women's Forum - featuring distinguished and accomplished panelists who represent important benchmarks for gender equality was organized (i) to reaffirm commitments that have been made to women's rights and to urge members of the international community – Member States, donor countries, regional institutions, the private sector and civil society actors –to prioritize actions and resources for meeting those commitments; (ii) to highlight Africa's implementation and accountability crisis toward gender equality commitments and women's human rights; (iii) to propose a set of actionable recommendations to accelerate implementation of and strengthen accountability for gender equality and women's human rights. At the mid-point

in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, the accelerated implementation of commitments made to women's human rights and gender equality must be a cornerstone of the process towards eradicating poverty and achieving sound, transparent governance and sustainable development.

## **2. Organization:**

The Africa Women's Forum (AWF) represents an inter-agency effort led and coordinated by UNIFEM that included UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNV, OSAA, ECA, the African Union and was co-hosted by the Governments of Liberia, Rwanda and Iceland, as well as the European Commission and the African Union.

The AWF was co-chaired by UNIFEM and the Office of the Special Advisor of the Secretary General and moderated by Honorable Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament. Panelists represented government ministers, commissioners of regional institutions (EC and the AU Commissions), the private sector and civil society:

- H.E. Ms. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development, Liberia;
- H.E. Ms Rosemary Museminali, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Rwanda;
- H.E. Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, European Commission;
- H.E. Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Iceland;
- H.E. Ms. Nilcea Freire, Head of the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies of the Presidency of the Republic, Brazil;
- Ms. Carin Taylor Senior Manager Organizational Effectiveness, CISCO Systems;
- Dr. Codou Diaw Executive Director, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE);
- Ms. Kafui Kuwonu, Program Officer, Women in Law and Development WiLDAF.

Each Panelist was asked to focus their remarks on the following questions:

1. What needs to be done to ensure that other countries and organizations can achieve what Rwanda and Liberia have achieved? What are the critical ingredients that women need to demand from Government as a norm?
2. What concrete strategies and reforms are most urgently needed to address the gender gap in leadership in Africa?
3. Between Ghana and the road to Doha, what strategies need to be put in place to ensure that Governments' resources address the glaring gender gaps in health, insecure livelihoods, pervasive violence against women, and education? How do we ensure that regional commitments – like the commitment in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa to establish an African Bank for Women – are met?

### **3. Summary Discussions**

Each speaker emphasized that gender equality and women's empowerment are key drivers for reducing poverty, building food security, reducing maternal mortality, safeguarding the environment and enhancing the effectiveness of aid as well as a critical means of achieving the MDGs. Today, the international community and African governments suffer from a severe crisis of implementation of commitments to African Women, having established few concrete measures, or sufficiently undertaken public sector reform and allocated adequate resources to implement their commitments on education for girls in post primary education; reproductive and maternal health, governance and participation.

#### **Brief Background:**

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, MDG 1, means addressing food security. Women contribute between 60 to 80 per cent of the labour for agricultural production. Yet, the inputs needed to improve women's contributions to food security remain in short supply. In sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of universal access to water means that women spend 40 billion hours a year collecting water, the equivalent of a year's worth of labour by the entire workforce of France. In conflict areas, women's roles in collecting water and fuel are a primary factor in their vulnerability to rape and sexual violence. And women's land rights remain elusive in too many countries.

Slow progress for too many women on Goals 2, 3 and 5 of the MDGs also calls the level of commitment to gender equality into question. While we know that post-primary education has the greatest impact on women's empowerment, only 23% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa enroll in secondary schools. Maternal mortality is the most off track of the MDGs with the current rate of progress less than one-fifth of what is needed to achieve the target. Of the more than 500,000 women dying in childbirth, more than half of them are in Africa. We know what is needed to change these numbers, but donors and governments continue to fail to prioritize action and investments. In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of adults living with HIV in 2007 were women, up from 54% in 1990. Imagine how many lives could have been saved if the warnings of women's human rights advocates in the 1990s had been taken seriously by decision-makers.

These deficits can undermine the impressive gains made so far by countries such as Rwanda and Liberia in the area of increased women's political participation. The proportion of seats held by women in lower houses of national parliaments has doubled, from 9.1% in 2000 to 17.3% in 2008, still too slow but advancing. Rwanda has now become the first country in the world where women outnumber men in the legislature: 57% of Rwanda's parliamentarians are women. In 2006, Liberia elected its first female President (and only female head of state in Africa). The political will that has been shown in introducing positive action measures is yielding results. And while there remains much to be done, there is momentum in efforts to strengthen leadership for women's rights and gender equality.

Other **common or important messages** that have been distilled from the discussions include:

- Without the empowerment of women, Africa will not reach the level of development needed nor achieve the MDG goals by 2015.
- In an effort to rebuild more stable and equitable societies, the post-conflict period presents a unique opportunity to review and revise a country's legal

system, laws and regulations to ensure the centrality of women in political and economic governance structures as the case of Liberia and Rwanda underscore. It is also an opportunity to create and evolve a new political culture where women have greater decision-making roles and authority.

- Women's needs must be addressed through holistic, cross-sectoral programming to ensure that women from all sectors of life are able to participate.
- Women at all levels must keep gender at the forefront of the discussions. There is a need for women to participate fully in political processes, especially peace processes if sustainable peace or development is to be achieved.
- Partnerships between the international community and African governments and institutions, including civil society, are critical for creating synergy in their work in support of gender equality and women's human rights and achieving greater impact. Together their complementary roles can be harnessed to move gender equality forward in national plans, policies and programmes.
- The private sector can play an important role to enhance women's economic security and empowerment by training and equipping women and young girls with the necessary skills to compete in today's global economy.
- Education is critical to wider processes for GE and women's human rights and should also be viewed a means to developing other sectors such as health, economic opportunities, women's political participation.
- Donors recognize that in addition to increased ODA, attention must be paid to its quality and predictability. The European Commission, with the UK and the Netherlands, is spearheading new methodologies of aid management. The EC has committed to disbursing 50% of its assistance direct to host government national budgets on the basis of agreed national strategies, with expenditure frameworks and progress benchmarking.
- Improving and strengthening national statistical systems is necessary to ensure that gender is properly reflected in aid programmes that run in accordance with the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness. ("EC/UN Partnership for Gender Equality in Development and Peace")

All the distinguished panelists unanimously stressed the importance for governments to open up the *space for political engagement of women* that will allow for the expression of their voices and leadership in the formulation of policy and programmes at national and regional levels.

4.

## **Conclusions, Recommendations and Follow-up Actions**

To accelerate the achievement of MDGs in Africa, panelists proposed nine actionable recommendations for African Governments, including one for the international community as whole:

- i. Strengthen commitments to implement gender equality and women's empowerment through strengthening mandates, incentives and resources for delivering on the commitments to women's rights;
- ii. Increase resources for gender equality outcomes, especially in the framework of the modalities of financing development in Africa; allocate significant resources to strengthen African Women's organizations;
- iii. Take concrete measures to enhance women's political participation and increase their transformative leadership in achieving sustainable development and the MDGs. This will ensure Government accountability to women's needs;
- iv. Ensure that Direct Budget Support adequately addresses gender equality outcomes by using gender responsive budgeting to allocate and monitor budgets.
- v. Leverage girls' education as a transformative force for addressing the complex barriers to women's empowerment, and widen the scope of MDG 2 to ensure quality, equity, inclusion, and transition to higher levels of education. It is critical to guarantee gender parity in enrollment, retention and successful completion at all levels, and women and girls' access to technical, vocational and literacy training.
- vi. Guarantee women's equal right to life and good health through ensuring universal access to reproductive health, accelerating implementation of existing policies and legislation that reduce women and girls' greater vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, and repealing discriminatory HIV/Aids laws.
- vii. Guarantee women's access to and control over productive assets such as land, adopt specific legislation for protecting women's inheritance rights to land and land-based resources, and promote women's entrepreneurship.
- viii. Enable women in conflict and post-conflict societies to be engaged in peace-processes and reconstruction efforts in line with UN Resolution 1325, as effective change agents in the development process.
- ix. Governments, the United Nations, civil society organizations and the private sector should make concerted efforts to build on and accelerate progress in advancing gender in all the MDGs, and document lessons learnt through better reporting on implementation of gender related conventions. In this regard, civil society organizations and women's networks should be strengthened to hold Government accountable and make meaningful contribution to key policy arenas.

**Annex I: Press Release**

**Annex II: Final Programme**

**Annex III: Biographies of Speakers**

## Annex I: Press Release

# Empowering Women Central to Africa's Progress

Women's forum to highlight urgent needs at the UN High Level Meeting on Africa's development needs

**For immediate release**

**Date: 19 September 2008**

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New York— Many African women and their communities are worse off today than they were a decade ago -- in spite of the Beijing Platform of Action and subsequent inter-governmental commitments made at international conferences or ratifications of United Nations and African Union conventions and declarations by Member States. For millions of African women, hunger, violence, exclusion and discrimination are their everyday realities.

As world leaders meet to take stock of the progress in Africa on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, gender experts will convene the Africa Women's Forum to address the achievements that have been made and the challenges that remain for the continent's women. Governments and donors will be urged to prioritize women's empowerment and gender equality to ensure real progress in Africa. At the mid-point in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 —an internationally agreed set of eight goals responding to the world's main development challenges—gender experts urge that the accelerated implementation of commitments made to women's human rights and gender equality be a cornerstone of the process towards eradicating poverty and achieving sound, transparent governance and sustainable development.

While African governments score high in terms of ratifying and developing policies, performance is weak when it comes to their implementation, as a recent UNECA report evaluating government performance vis-à-vis their commitments to gender equality and women's human rights found. Serious and persistent obstacles such as chronic poverty, continued inter-generational cycle of violence and abusive practices, the lack of equal access to health, especially reproductive health services and HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment, education, training and employment, as well as the impact of armed conflict and natural disasters continue to undermine the advancement of women and their participation in decision-making processes.

The Africa Women's Forum will address the health and empowerment of African women, including improved access to reproductive health and focus on maternal health-- MDG 5-- which is the least likely of the MDGs to be achieved. Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high across much of the developing world, with one woman dying every minute (more than 500,000 per year) from complications of pregnancy and childbirth and slightly more than half of the deaths occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, gender inequality is a key driver of the AIDS epidemic, increasing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection, and intensifying the burden of care in families and communities affected by AIDS on women and girls - often at the expense of their economic and educational opportunities. African women represent the largest demographic segment affected by HIV/AIDS constituting 58% of the 25 million Africans infected by the disease.

African women have not realized meaningful gains from the sustained growth of their national economies in recent years. Deregulation and privatization, labor migration patterns, and resulting changes in family structures have further marginalized women. Today, they are the backbone of the informal economy, especially in the agricultural sector. . They lack access to productive resources, including credit, land, and technical and support services. Where African countries have made remarkable strides is in increased women's political participation resulting from government quotas or reserving seats for women in national and local, legislative bodies. The share of parliamentary seats held by women increased from 7% in 1990 to 17% in 2007, in line with the global average. Rwanda now ranks first among all countries of the world in terms of the number of women elected to parliament, and where women outnumber men in parliament, as provisional election results indicate.

Representatives of Member States, donor countries, regional institutions, private sector and civil society groups attending the Africa Women's Forum will call upon Governments and other power-holders to translate their commitments to action.

### **DETAILS OF AFRICA WOMEN'S FORUM**

Date and Time: 22 September 2008, 3.00- 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room 3, UN Secretariat

Speakers: Ms. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender of Liberia; Ms. Rosemary Museminali, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda; Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner of External Relations, European Commission; Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland; Ms. Nilcea Freire, Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres da Presidência da República Federativa do Brasil; Ms. Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Director of Women and Gender Directorate, African Commission; and Ms. Carin Taylor, Senior Manager Organizational Effectiveness, CISCO Systems among others.

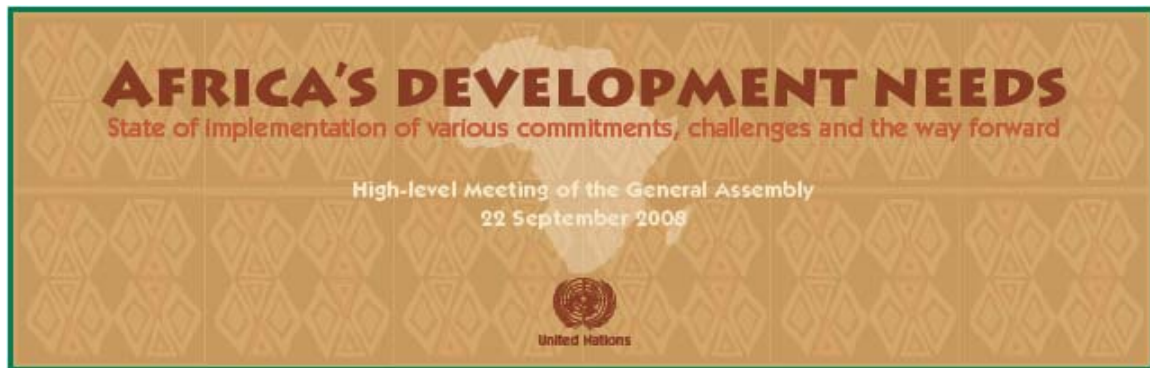
Lead Agency: UNIFEM

Sponsors/Co-Sponsors: OSAA, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNV, ITC, UNECA, AU

Co-hosts: Permanent Missions of Liberia, Rwanda, Iceland and the African Union and European Commission

*(The Forum will be open to the media)*

## Annex II: Final Programme



### Side Event: Africa Women's Forum

## Accelerating Implementation of Commitments to Gender equality & Women Human Rights

### Programme

**Time:** 3:00 – 6:00 PM

**Venue:** Conference Room 3, UN Secretariat

**The objective of the Africa Women's Forum is three-fold:**

- To take stock of achievements in the implementation of international, regional and national commitments to gender equality and women's human rights.
- To identify the challenges faced by Member States in implementing these commitments
- To make concrete, actionable recommendations to accelerate progress for the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights.

**3:00 – 3:10 PM Welcome & Introduction**

**Co-Chairs:** Ms. Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; and

Ms. Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director - Programs, UNIFEM

**3:10 – 3:20 PM Opening Remarks and Introduction to Speakers**

**Moderator:** Honorable Gertrude Mongella, President, Pan-African Parliament

**3:20 – 4:20 PM Panel Presentations**

**H.E. Ms. Vabah Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development of Liberia**

“Women's transformative leadership: Successes and Challenges”

**H.E. Ms. Rosemary Museminali, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda**

“Lessons of Women’s Political Participation and Governance”

**Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations, European Commission**

“EC-UN Partnership: Accelerating implementation of commitments to gender equality”

**H.E. Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland**

Donor Country Perspective

**H.E. Ms. Nilcea Freire, Secretaria Especial de Politicas para as Mulheres da Presidencia da Republica Federativa do Brasil**

South-South Cooperation

**4:20 – 4:35**

**Summary by Moderator  
With opportunity for Q&A before resuming panel presentations**

**4:40 – 5:10 PM Continuation of Panel Presentations**

**Ms. Carin Taylor, Senior Manager Organizational Effectiveness, CISCO Systems**

“Role of private sector for accelerating economic security and rights for women”

**Dr. Codou Diaw, Executive Director, Forum for African Women Educationalists**

“Cross-Sectoral Dimension for the Empowerment of Women”

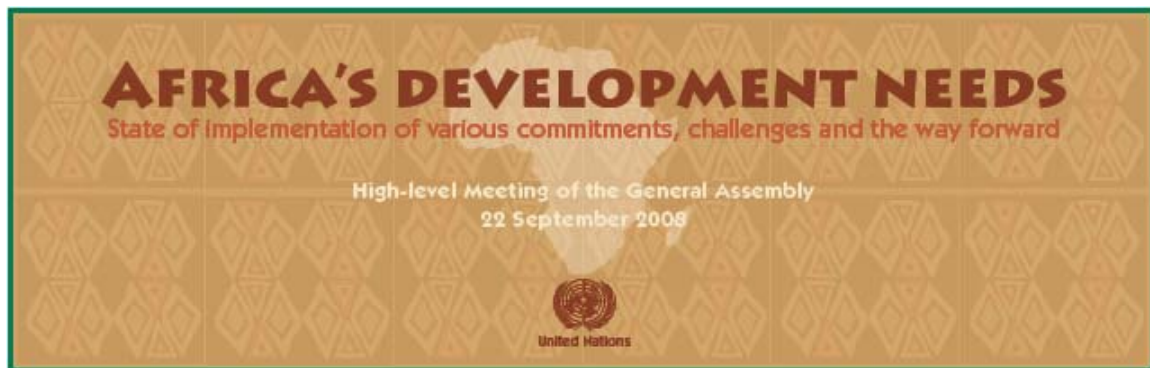
**Ms. Kafui Kuwonu, Program Manager, West Africa, Women in the Law and Development**

“Financial Dimensions of Governance”

**5:10 – 5:45**

**Discussion, Summary and Closing by Moderator**

## Annex III: Speaker Bios



### Side Event: Africa Women's Forum

Accelerating Implementation of Commitments to Gender equality  
& Women Human Rights

#### Biographies of Speakers

#### **Honorable Gertrude Mongella (Moderator)** **President, Pan-African Parliament**

In March 2004 Gertrude Mongella was chosen to be the first President of the Pan-African Parliament. Known as Mama Beijing, Ms. Mongella served as Chairperson of the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. After being appointed Minister of State for Women's Affairs, she became Minister of Lands, Natural Resources and Tourism from 1985 to 1987 and for the following four years, worked at the Tanzanian President's Office as Minister Without Portfolio. She has represented Tanzania in numerous conferences dedicated to women's rights and the environment during the 1980s and early 1990s, being appointed vice-chair of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievement on the UN Decade for Women, performing similar duties for the UN before her appointment to Beijing in 1995.

In 1998, she was invited to return to Beijing by the women of China to speak about women's rights and since then took up several advisory positions at the United Nations. Her constant emphasis on debate and dialogue and the need to have clear principles was exemplified in her statement at the African Women's Forum at which she stated: "You have to be clear what you want and what you stand for. You must stand for principle. Principle will never let you down...You have to be able to choose what are the principles worth dying for".

#### **H.E. Ms. Vabah Kazaku Gayflor** **Minister of Gender and Development, Liberia.**

As minister of Gender and Development, Ms. Vabah Gayflor facilitates and supervises the formulation of national policies and the development of programs to ensure a government-wide mainstreaming of gender, with particular emphasis on the advancement of women and development of children. As part of her mandate, she fosters alliances among women's groups through meetings, programs, and skills-building workshops. Ms. Gayflor works through the Results-Focused Transition Framework Implementation and Monitoring Committee to oversee the inclusion of women within the transitional process in Liberia. She also lobbies the

government to support police and security assistance. As chief of section of the Women and Children's Affairs Coordination Unit of the Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Ms. Gayflor helped develop gender-based poverty alleviation and governance programs, coordinate the activities of women's NGOs, and facilitate the mainstreaming of women and children's issues. She also served as domestic assistant counterpart to the chief technical advisor on the Government of Liberia to projects organized by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Development Programme for Women (UNIFEM). In this capacity, she participated in the UNDP and UNIFEM sponsored Socio-Economic Gender Analysis and Strategic Planning Workshop. Ms. Gayflor holds a master's degree in women, gender, and development.

**H.E. Ms. Rosemary Museminali  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Rwanda.**

In March 2008, Ms. Museminali was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Rwanda after having served three years as Minister of State for foreign affairs in charge of Cooperation. In the post-Genocide period, Ms. Museminali worked as head of Department for Social Services developing, implementing and co-coordinating programmes to support vulnerable groups of people -- refugees, internally displaced, widows, orphans, aged, disabled, and the poor. She also served as the Secretary General for National Red Cross Society of Rwanda. Between 2000-2005, she was Rwanda's Ambassador to the Court of St. James in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, and the Scandinavian countries.

Ms. Museminali has actively participated in national and international fora such as the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women Development in China, in OAU Social affairs and Labour commissions, International Red Cross, Red Crescent conferences, conferences for children in difficult circumstances. She has also served on various boards such as National Fund for Survivors of Genocide of Rwanda and as a trustee of Rwanda Rural rehabilitation initiative.

**Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner  
Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, European Commission.**

Ms. Ferrero-Waldner has served as the European commissioner for external relations and European neighbourhood policy since 2004. As commissioner, Ms Ferrero-Waldner co-ordinates the external relations activities of the European Commission, acting as its interface with the EU's general affairs and external relations council. She also ensures that the Commission has a clear identity and a coherent approach in its external activities. Ms Ferrero-Waldner was born in 1948 in Salzburg, Austria, and received her doctorate in law from the University of Salzburg. Prior to her current position, Ms Ferrero-Waldner served as Austria's federal minister for foreign affairs and state secretary of foreign affairs. Between 1993 and 1995 she served as deputy chief of protocol at the federal ministry for foreign affairs, then chief of protocol at the executive office of the secretary general, United Nations secretariat, New York. Ms Ferrero-Waldner has held a number of positions in Austrian embassies, including first secretary in the Austrian embassy in Dakar, Senegal, and counsellor for economic affairs at the Austrian embassy in Paris. Before entering the diplomatic service, Ms Ferrero-Waldner worked in the private sector and held a number of management positions in Europe and the United States.

**H.E. Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Iceland.**

Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir became Iceland's Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 24th 2007 after forming a new coalition government in Iceland with the participation of the Social Democratic Alliance, the party which she leads, and the Independence Party led by Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde. Minister Gísladóttir was a founding member of the Women's Party ("Kvennalistinn") in 1982 and represented the party in Reykjavik's City Council from 1982 to 1988. Minister Gísladóttir was MP for the Women's Party from 1991 to 1994, when she was elected Mayor of Iceland's capital, Reykjavík. She was re-elected as Mayor twice in 1998 and 2002.

A founding member of the Social Democratic Alliance in 2000 (when the Women's Party formally merged with the SDA), she became an MP for the party in 2005 and was elected leader of the SDA in a party-wide vote that same year. The Social Democratic Alliance is now the second largest political party in Iceland and a member of SAMAK, a forum for social democrats in the Nordic countries.

She has chaired numerous committees and boards on a wide range of issues. She sat on the Board of the Central Bank of Iceland 2003-2005. As an MP she was especially involved in environmental and European issues (EFTA and EEA). Nominated in 1991 to the Icelandic Literature Prize for a biographical work *Pegar sálin fer á kreik* about the women's pioneer Sigurveig Gudmundsdóttir, she has also been editor of *Vera*, a feminist journal.

**H.E. Ms. Nilcea Freire**  
**Head of the Special Secretariat for Women's Policies of the Presidency of the Republic, Brazil**

Ms. Nilcea Freire was appointed Minister in January 2004 and has since actively spearheaded various activities in gender mainstreaming in Brazil including: the convening of the "Women's Year in Brazil"; organizing the First National Conference of Policies for Women; establishing the "National Plan of Policies for Women"; and revising national laws on domestic violence against women.

She holds other public responsibilities that include the President of the Inter-American Women Committee as well as the President of the National Council of Women Rights. Ms. Freire is a member of ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean) roundtable. Prior to her ministerial appointment, Ms. Freire has had a long standing career as a physician and also as an academic, including her service as Director of the State University of Rio de Janeiro from 2000 to 2003, and Vice-Director from 1996 to 1999.

**Ms. Carin Taylor**  
**Senior Manager Organizational Effectiveness, CISCO Systems.**

Ms. Carin Taylor, a 14 year veteran at Cisco Systems, is the Senior Manager of Global Inclusion and Diversity. Carin has an extensive background in Global Operations Management including focuses in Customer Service, Finance, Sales, and Human Resources. Her experience includes a 5 year assignment in Australia, and extensive travel to many countries in both Asia and Europe. Carin is a diversity champion dedicated to evolving Cisco's Inclusion and Diversity strategy including efforts for increasing the empowerment and leadership of women and underrepresented minorities. Carin's current role includes developing and overseeing over 45

Employee Resource Groups focused on development, recruitment, and business partnerships. Carin is also responsible for creating, planning, and executing strategic programs to support Inclusion and Diversity. Carin is a coach, consultant, and advocate for Inclusion and Diversity both inside Cisco Systems and within the community. In her spare time, Carin enjoys spending time with her family, and playing competitive sports.

**Dr. Codou Diaw**

**Executive Director, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)**

Dr. Diaw is Executive Director of FAWE, a pan-African NGO engaged in the promotion of gender equality in education in sub-Saharan Africa. Formerly Deputy Program Director for Education at the Japan International Cooperation Agency's regional bureau in Dakar, she also worked as a consultant with the UNESCO-BREDA, the World Bank in Washington DC, and organizations such as Femmes Africa Solidarité in Geneva. Dr. Diaw has contributed to publications such as African Education; Sociological Perspectives and the Language, Literacy and Culture Review. She has also presented her work at several education conferences. In 2003, Dr. Diaw received a Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship in Women's Studies for "Original and significant research on Women's issues that crosses disciplinary, regional and cultural boundaries." Dr. Diaw is currently a member of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and of Sister Mentors. She is also a volunteer for organizations such as the World YWCA and International Conference Volunteers (ICV).

**Ms. Kafui Kuwonu**

**Program Officer, Women in Law and Development (WiLDAF)**

As Program Officer of the West Africa Sub-Regional office, Ms. Kuwonu oversees programs in eight countries – Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Conakry, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo – and develops and promotes strategies that link law and development for the emergence of a culture for the exercise and respect of women's rights in Africa. She is presently implementing an EU-funded project - Good Governance and Women's Participation in West Africa - that is building capacities of women in urban and rural areas to influence decisions, policies and programmes implemented by local and national authorities for a better consideration of the basic human rights of women and gender equity. WiLDAF is the only pan-African regional network dedicated to the promotion of women's rights as an integral part of development at local, national and regional levels.

**Ms. Rachel Mayanja (Co-Chair)**

**Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, United Nations.**

Since 2004, Ms. Rachel Mayanja has served as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. She is a long-serving career international civil servant with vast experience in normative, policy and operational work of the United Nations, including peace-building, peace-keeping and inter-agency collaboration.

Ms. Mayanja's career with the UN started in the Women's Division shortly after the first World Conference in Mexico in the midst of sensitization of the world to women's right to equality, development and peace. As Secretary to the drafting committee of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, she was actively involved in the establishment of this landmark legal instrument.

Ms. Mayanja actively participated in peace-building and peace-keeping missions and therefore possesses an understanding of the suffering created by conflicts and the challenges facing the UN in such situations. This first hand knowledge is essential in her role as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, especially in the area of women, peace and security. Ms Mayanja, a national of Uganda, obtained a law degree from Makerere University, as well as a Master's Degree in Law from the Harvard University Law School. She has three children.

**Ms. Joanne Sandler (Co-Chair)**  
**Deputy Executive Director of Programs, UNIFEM**

Ms. Sandler guides UNIFEM's efforts to implement rights-based, results-based programmes in support of women's empowerment and rights in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. She has worked with international organizations and women's groups worldwide for the past 25 years, with a focus on organizational development, strategic planning and economic justice. She has also served on the Board of Directors of a number of international and domestic organizations, including the Association for Women's Rights in Development, Gender at Work, and Women Make Movies.



