

CONGO

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Unity * Work * Progress

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES AND
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

**SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES AND
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
having responsibility for the advancement of
women and their integration in development**

CABINET

**REPLY TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING THE
REPORT OF THE CONGO ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DAKAR PLAN OF ACTION
AND BEIJING+10**

INTRODUCTION

As part of its review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), the Commission on the Status of Women sent a questionnaire to States for the purpose of collecting information to help to determine the progress made with respect to the advancement of women, the problems encountered, the remaining challenges and the lessons to be drawn.

With regard to the Beijing recommendations, from among the 12 areas of critical concern identified as obstacles to the improvement of the status of women the Congo has established a number of priorities, in the light of the post-conflict situation, which have now been included in the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, which served as the frame of reference for evaluation of these priorities. The priorities include combating violence against women and girls, women's participation in conflict resolution and the restoration of peace, and the fight against poverty, which are regarded as areas where urgent action is needed, as well as questions of health, the environment, literacy and training and human rights, as factors affecting the full flowering and outreach of women and girls which are essential areas of action and engines of development throughout the implementation of the various action plans.

It must be pointed out that some of the measures have not been carried out, owing to the post-conflict situation mentioned above and the realities of the moment, which have forced Congo to impose a strict ranking on its priorities.

On the other hand, some of the priorities have been fully integrated in the measures taken both by the Government and by civil society in collaboration with bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies.

However, it must be said that the work area for the advancement of women remains a vast one and the action taken so far does no more than give a true indication of the Government's intervention to secure a qualitative change in the status of women in Congolese society.

This evaluation report has four parts:

1. Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment;
2. Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;
3. Part Three: Institutional development;
4. Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them.

PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Question (a)

The preparation of a national gender policy is under way in Congo. In 1999 the Government adopted a National Policy for the Advancement of Women with a corresponding Plan of Action for 2000-2002, on the basis of which the Department for the Advancement of Women has taken measures to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This Plan of Action addresses several areas and its implementation implies the participation of other actors:

- The other ministerial departments concerned;
- NGOs and other associations, religious organizations and development partners;
- The agencies of the United Nations system.

To this end, the focal points designated in the different ministries transmit regular reports to the Department, thus ensuring the coordination and monitoring of the Plan of Action on the basis of a number of pre-established indicators.

This work is carried on at the local level by the departmental offices for the advancement of women.

Question (b)

Now that the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women executed in 2000-2002 has come to an end, a further plan is being considered by a national workshop, at which the main policy lines have been determined, organized jointly by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the project "Promotion of equality between men and women". This new plan, which takes account of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), includes the following four priority areas, amongst others:

- Combating poverty;
- Human rights of women and girls;
- Combating HIV/AIDS;
- Education (combating illiteracy);
- Violence against women.

It constitutes the current working basis of the Department for the Advancement of Women, which also monitors the progress.

The implementation of this new plan of action is encountering difficulties, in particular of a material and financial order.

Question (c)

It should be noted in connection with the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs that the Congo's development plans and programmes on education, health and the empowerment of women do take the MDGs into account: poverty reduction, improvement of maternal health, reduction of maternal and infant mortality, and lifelong education.

In fact, in the area of education for example, the Schools Act (No. 25/95 of 19 November 1995) guarantees equal access to education for all children. Education in public schools is free of charge and compulsory up to age 16.

This system has produced a very high level of school attendance.

The enrolment rate of girls in primary school is almost equal to the boys' rate; but since 1990 there has been a noticeable and steady decline in the number of girls attending school as a result of the armed conflicts: a drop of two per cent against 1.5 per cent for boys. The attendance rates for primary school are:

- Boys: 51.70 per cent
- Girls: 48.20 per cent

The statistics show that drop-outs do not begin until the sixth year of the first level (puberty phase).

Special attention is given to Goal 3, on promotion of gender equality, in the poverty reduction paper and the strategic framework for combating HIV/AIDS.

Question (d)

In January 2003 the Congo presented its combined initial and second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

It should be noted that, even before this presentation, several improvements of a legal kind had been brought about: for example, Congo's ratification of international conventions and charters and other legislation, and the adoption of domestic positive-discrimination laws, including the Real Property Act.

Draft legislation eliminating the discrimination found in some national instruments has been prepared on the basis of the findings of studies carried out by the Department for the Advancement of Women. This draft legislation includes inter alia revisions of the Family Code, the General Taxation Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Question (e)

The following are the main legislative and policy-making achievements of the past decade:

Legislative

- Recognition of the principle of equality between men and women in all the successive Constitutions;
- Inclusion in the Constitution of 20 January 2002 of a provision on the due representation of women in decision-making bodies. Article 8 states: “Women have the same rights as men, and the law shall guarantee their position and their due representation in all political, elective and administrative posts.

Policy-making

Much progress has been made with respect to women’s participation in the country’s political life, as the following statistics show:

Table 1: Comparison of 1992 and 2002 election results

	1992						2002					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Legislature	119	95.96	5	4.04	124	100	117	90.69	12	9.31	129	100
Senate	58	96.66	2	2.34	60	100	51	85.00	9	15.00	60	100
Local	-	-	-	-	-	-	727	47.76	795	52.24	1,522	100

Source: Ministry for the Advancement of Women.

Question (f)

The mainstreaming of the gender dimension is demonstrated by the inclusion in the annual budgets of a line on the funding of women’s activities. Under the 2004 Finance Act the investment budget allocated to the women’s department totals one billion CFA francs (CFAF). However, women’s issues are also addressed in the agriculture budget and the agriculture support fund, which accounts for 10 per cent of the total investment budget.

Question (g)

- Women have played a huge part in the national debate: in the General Women’s Conference, the National Reconciliation Forum, and the national and international mediation efforts. They also secured amendment of the first draft of the new Constitution, in particular article 8 on the representation of women;
- The major debates in which gender issues and women’s concerns have been systematically aired relate to:
 - The strategic poverty reduction paper, which is currently being finalized;
 - The strategic framework for combating HIV/AIDS; and
 - The agricultural development strategies 2004-2013.
- The following are some of the problems studied in recent years:
 - The feminization of poverty;
 - Women’s rights and HIV/AIDS;
 - The scant numbers of girls in technical and vocational education;

- The girls' drop-out rate;
- Sexist stereotypes.

Question (h)

Congolese women have played a huge part in the resolution of conflicts and maintenance of peace in both rural and urban areas by means of advocacy directed at political, religious, and traditional leaders and administrative officials and by influencing public opinion, holding peaceful marches, conducting religious ceremonies, and broadcasting radio and television programmes, as well as through the dispatch by the First Lady of the Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire peace train.

Question (i)

To some extent, globalization has indeed had some positive effects on the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality.

The use of information and communications technologies (computers and the Internet) has given women and girls access to the outside world on an equal footing with boys and men.

Unfortunately, women and girls do not always have easy access to these valuable tools because their market cost remains very high.

Question (j)

Specific policies, strategies and action plans for promotion of gender equality have been developed, both by the governmental authorities and by NGOs and other associations, in the areas of education, women's and girls' human rights, women's access to decision-making, violence against women, women's access to incomes, health and the environment, and commerce and trade.

The progress made

- With regard to rights:
 - The legislation drafted, the Real Property Act for example;
 - The establishment of legal clinics and legal assistance centres in urban and rural areas.
- With regard to violence:
 - Studies and surveys have been conducted by the Department for the Advancement of Women and the Population Office in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), including:
 - A study on sexual violence (extension to the northern part of the country);
 - A KAP (knowledge, attitudes and practices) study on sexual violence against girls and women, including sexual harassment;
 - A study on the legal penalties imposed on perpetrators of violence against women.
- With regard to women's access to incomes:
 - The mainstreaming of equality issues in the strategies for relaunch of the agricultural policy;

- The mainstreaming of the gender dimension in the poverty reduction strategy paper;
- With regard to health and the environment:
 - The mainstreaming of the gender approach in the interim population programme (2000-2002) and in the preparation of the third Congo-UNFPA population programme (2004-2008);
 - The formulation of the strategic framework for combating HIV/AIDS;
 - The formulation of the Congo-UNICEF country programme (2004-2008).

Women stand at the centre of the efforts to address environmental problems. They have taken part in the drafting of environmental instruments of national scope, including:

- The environmental action plan;
- The tropical forestry action plan;
- The regional environmental information project.

They have also taken part in the implementation of a number of projects, including the Central African “Conkouati” forest ecosystem project.

Question (k)

Apart from those forged with the ministerial departments, the main partnerships which have contributed to activities connected with gender equality and empowerment of women include the partnerships with the Association of Women Lawyers of the Congo (AFJC), the Association of Women Notaries Public of the Congo, the Reality and Perspectives Club, the National Committee on Women’s Human Rights (CONADEF), the Congolese Association for Family Well-being (ACBEF), the National Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians, the Congo Assistance Association, the National Centre for Women in Politics, the Support Centre for the Development of Girl Mothers, Education Professionals, and Mothers’ Movement for Development.

Question (l)

The efforts made to engage men and boys actively in the promotion of gender equality have focused on HIV/AIDS/STI education, sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and general education.

PART TWO: PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION AND THE FURTHER INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS IDENTIFIED AT THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Part Two presents the national policies, measures and documents adopted by the Government and highlights the principal achievements with respect to the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, the difficulties encountered in implementation, and the lessons drawn.

First critical area: The fight against poverty

The measures taken are those which offer the best response to women's needs; funding has been provided by the Government and by bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies.

1. By the Government

The Government has taken several measures to improve the living conditions of women and rural families within the framework of the implementation of the interim post-conflict programme. In fact, the budget authorization for the programme on the advancement of women provided for a total of 2.719 billion CFA francs (CFAF) over three years. The sum disbursed over that period amounted to CFAF 599 million (22%), corresponding to the contribution under the Diversified Investment Provision (PID).

All the activities were supported by the State budget, in a total amount of CFAF 921,750,000, including 599,000,000 in PID funds. The remaining amount, i.e. the CFAF 322,750,000 allocated from the investment and operational budgets, was used for the organization in Brazzaville of the General Conference of Congolese Women (CFAF 150 million) and the subregional consultation on women's rights in Africa (CFAF 40 million) and for the operation of the central and regional offices for the advancement of women.

The PID funding was used for the implementation of the projects listed below, under the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (2000-2002):

1. Support for the loans system for women's production activities;
2. Production and distribution of improved seeds in rural areas;
3. National capacity building;
4. Support for rural development activities and institutions.

The funds were used as follows:

- 50 per cent for funding women's economic micro-projects, including the consolidation of the financial capacity of the women's savings and loans banks;
- 30.5 per cent for institution building and support for production and promotion activities;
- 19.5 per cent for reinforcement of women's managerial and technical capacities.

2. By multilateral cooperation agencies

In partnership with United Nations agencies and other institutions working through a number of States, the Government has funded several projects in a total estimated amount of CFAF 1,269,728,661. These projects include:

(a) Promotion of equality between women and men, phases I and II

This project was financed by UNDP in an amount of \$US 560,300 (CFAF 420,225,000) for phase I and \$US 779,077 (CFAF 420,492,350) for phase II, for an overall total of CFAF 848,717,350.

Under phase I of the project, support was furnished for women's economic activities, mainly women victims of the conflicts, through the promotion of income-generating activities. The promotional measures consisted of providing the targeted women and girls, grouped together in women's organizations, with sustainable means of subsistence through the funding of income-generating micro-projects.

Between 1999 and 2001, 107 micro-projects were funded, with 7,778 direct beneficiaries.

The project also supported the efforts to restore and build up the managerial and technical capacities of women's savings and loans banks by providing them with accounting and technical manuals, and by granting micro-loans for income-generating activities of women working alone or in groups. The following banks were involved:

- Brazzaville - 3
- Owando (Cuvette) - 1; Oyo (Cuvette) - 1; Makoua (Cuvette) - 1; Boundji and Bokouélé - 2; Pointe-Noire (Kouilou) - 1; Dolisie (Niari) - 1; and Sibiti (Lékoumou) - 1.

In addition, 600 persons received training as part of the effort to build up the capacities of members of organizations in the fields of dyeing, small-scale confectionery, management of micro-activities, project formulation and management, management of women's savings and loans banks, and soap manufacture.

Several other activities were carried out under phase II of the project, including:

- Establishment of a back-up centre for women's savings and loans banks in Brazzaville. This centre, which is equipped and operational, has received financial support from the World Bank for three training sessions for bank managers;
- Technical capacity building for women through the conduct of workshops on bank organization and operation for 85 bank personnel and 10 managers;
- The conduct of studies and design of an accounting system, and the execution of refurbishing work in the three Brazzaville banks.

The total cost of these activities is \$US 27,946 (CFAF 15,370,300).

(b) Support for the Maison de la femme

This project consisted of the refitting of the Maison de la Femme, which is now called the Centre for Research, Information and Documentation on Women; it enjoyed financial support from UNDP totalling CFAF 35 million.

(c) Women's capacity building

This project was financed by UNICEF in an amount of \$US 27,000 (CFAF 18,590,895). Its implementation included the following activities:

- Training for three staff members of the Ministry responsible for questions of gender, population and development at the Centre for Research, Documentation and Information on Women, in Tunisia;
- Training for 100 extension workers and members of 32 women's groups in Djambala and Boundji in group formation and management of women's banks, and for 15 managers of women's banks in Pointe-Noire and Boundji in the management of women's banks;
- Provision of farm inputs for groups receiving training and allocation of a revolving micro-loan fund for the banks.

It must be stressed that in the period 2000-2002 the Government, in partnership with development agencies (UNDP and UNICEF), allocated micro-loan funds to 14 existing women's savings and loans banks throughout the country, in a total amount of CFAF 33,890,000.

During the same period the women's banks made micro-loans to women engaged in agriculture and livestock-raising, fishing, small-scale commerce and trade, and handicrafts, in a total amount of CFAF 101 million.

(d) Women's capacity building in fish-curing

Under this FAO-supported project, equipment was provided for nine women's cooperative groups in Epéna, Bokouélé, Mossaka, Pointe-Noire and Ouessou in the form of 20 improved ovens and 100 racks, with the aim not only of alleviating the harshness of these women's work but also of helping to improve the food security of the Congolese people.

In addition to this project, FAO organized a workshop in conjunction with the Department for the Advancement of Women to disseminate techniques for the conservation and processing of agricultural and fisheries products; 16 women trainers from 10 departments took an active part in the proceedings.

FAO also funded a study on the situation of rural women in the Cuvette region.

The cost of all these interventions totals CFAF 21,773,000.

(e) Improvement of the status of women

This UNFPA-funded project included a study on women's participation in development by sector of activity. The cost of the study amounted to CFAF 22,487,000.

(f) National capacity building for the implementation of activities for women

This UNFPA-funded project included the organization of the following activities:

- An introductory seminar on the creation of micro-enterprises; 300 women members of NGOs and other associations from rural and urban areas received training; for a total cost of six million CFA francs;
- Conduct of a study on the needs of Congolese women with regard to their integration in the development process; cost: CFAF 40 million.

(g) Assistance projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock

With financial support from development partners (FAO, Sweden, United States of America, Norway, United Nations Office for Project Services), the Government has executed a number of assistance projects in a total amount of \$US 2,329,625 (CFAF 163,739,500).

These projects consisted of the distribution of essential farm inputs (seeds and ploughing equipment) and benefited 256,268 persons, 65 per cent of them women. They helped to restore large-scale agricultural production as a means of improving food security.

3. By bilateral cooperation agencies

In terms of the provision of bilateral assistance, the All-China Women's Federation has contributed to the Government's efforts to secure the advancement of women by combating poverty with the donation of farm, information technology and sewing equipment and pharmaceutical products, in a total amount of CFAF 40,338,000.

Second critical area: Education

The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with agencies of the United Nations system and other social partners, are carrying out various education measures, including:

1. By the Government

- Adoption of the 2002 Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All, which was formulated with the help of all the partners and ratified by the Congo in 2002;
- Signature by the Congo of the Ouagadougou Declaration on the Education of Girls;
- Reassessment of the Portella Act on the protection of minors;
- Launch of the project "Development of a new teaching culture" financed by the Government and UNICEF with the aim of reducing the drop-out rate to under 20 per cent while maintaining parity between males and females;

- The establishment of the Centre for Research, Information and Documentation on Women by Decree No. 99/299 of 31 December 1999. This institution operates as a reception centre and a space for meeting other people and exchanging of information, as well as offering education, communication and training activities for women;
- Capacity building in:
 - Health, environment, gender and development, education, women's rights, and violence against women;
 - Information technology and the Internet;
 - Techniques of processing and conservation of farm products, with the assistance of foreign experts;
 - Combating poverty, malaria and HIV/AIDS;
- Revision of school curricula, including the introduction of an HIV/AIDS component;
- HIV/AIDS awareness-raising for students and teachers in the school districts and the administrative districts of Brazzaville (7,000 participants);
- Creation of a governmental post of High Commissioner for Civic and Moral Education;
- Inclusion of the topic of parental responsibility (reproductive health) in school curricula;
- Establishment of women's reception centres in Brazzaville (Saint Charles Luanga, Little Sisters clinic, Sainte Marie de Ouenzé church, and Notre Dame du Rosaire church). More than 200 women attend these centres, where they learn to read and write, knit, sew, etc.);
- Establishment of a literacy centre in Béné (Plateaux Department), which is attended by many children and adults, mostly Pygmies, aged six to 25;
- Relaunch of activities in the women's literacy centres and mobilization against illiteracy;
- Relaunch of the integration, re-education and re-adaptation activities in the reception centres for girls and women in distress;
- Relaunch of the education, training and information radio programme (Rural Radio);
- Support for the activities of disabled women, especially instruction in such small-scale handicrafts as sewing, knitting and embroidery.

2. By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- The initiation of remedial literacy classes for children in schools in Brazzaville, Plateaux and Cuvette Departments, with the support of the French Cooperation Agency (AfC) under the project for the relaunch of education in the Congo following the war;
- Reconstruction of schools destroyed in the war, with UNICEF and UNESCO support;
- Integration of Pygmies in the school system with the support of the United States NGO International Partnership for Human Development (IPHD) in Lékoumou Department, which was chosen as an experimental pilot zone. This NGO also supports school canteens in the same area under the "Food for education" project. In addition, it provides Pygmy pupils with essential items such as school perquisites, pharmaceutical products, soap, etc.);
- Establishment of a school by the Franciscan Sisters in Mokéko (Sangha Department) exclusively for Pygmy pupils;
- Introduction of a national education plan for the indigenous peoples, including Pygmies, supported by the World Bank;
- Installation of canteens in schools in the Departments of Kouilou, Bouenza, Niari, Plateaux, Cuvette and Cuvette-Ouest, with WFP and IPHD support.

Third critical area: Health and environment

The following are the main activities carried out:

1. By the Government

Promotion of safe motherhood

- Introduction of the use of scans in maternity cases;
- Training and further training of traditional midwives in the use of scans;
- Formulation and adoption of the reproductive health strategy (2000-2002);
- Dissemination of this strategy in some of the regions;
- Awareness-raising for the public on safe motherhood.

Support for population and family planning activities

- Establishment of reproductive health and family planning activities in a number of integrated health centres;
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns for people of reproductive age concerning the importance of family planning and reproductive and sexual health, under the project on national capacity building in the implementation of activities for women;
- Production and broadcasting of radio programmes on reproductive health and family planning;
- Introduction of the provision of female contraceptives.

Reduction of malnutrition

- Vitamin A supplements for children in primary school and for nursing mothers;
- Vaccination of children aged under five during national immunization days;
- Awareness campaigns on problems caused by iodine deficiency;
- Capacity building for health personnel in the promotion of maternal breastfeeding and the correct diet for young children;
- Capacity building for health personnel in the treatment of malnutrition and in nutritional monitoring;
- Training of mothers and young persons as nutritional extension workers to monitor children aged under two years and pregnant and nursing women in the community.

Reinforcement of prevention programmes to improve women's health

- The establishment of a National Information, Education and Communication Service;
- Awareness-raising campaigns on sexual violence and its prevention;
- Formulation of a national strategy for caring for women and children victims of wartime violence.

Expansion of women's access to health care and information and to related services

- Establishment of the National Centre for Essential Medicines (CENAMES) to facilitate access to treatment with low-cost generic drugs.

Reduction of vulnerability and risks connected with HIV/AIDS/STI

- Formulation and adoption of the strategic framework for combating HIV/AIDS/STI in the Republic of the Congo (2003-2007);
- Establishment of outpatient treatment centres;
- Formulation of a multi-sectoral plan of action to combat HIV/AIDS/STI;
- Opening of HIV/AIDS observation and awareness post (advice centres) in Brazzaville and the country's other big towns;
- Awareness-raising campaigns for the general public;
- Training seminars for young people.

2. By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- Renovation and equipping of health facilities (confinement ward), with support from WHO, UNFPA, and UNICEF;
- Study on the present situation of safe motherhood and the prospects as of 2000, with UNICEF support;
- Harmonization of the measures to combat sexual violence, with WHO support;
- Campaigns to raise the awareness of the general public of the value of impregnated mosquito nets, followed by distribution of nets in maternity wards in Madingou, Nkayi, Banda, Boundji, Bokouélé, Ngoko, Mossaka, Loukoléla, Tchikapika, Tisaki and Zanaga;
- Formulation and ratification of the operational sectoral plan to combat HIV/AIDS, with WHO support;
- Formulation of a specific plan to raise women's awareness of HIV/AIDS under the protection programme supported by UNICEF (Congo-UNICEF country programme 2004-2008);
- Conduct of synchronized immunization days under the expanded programme of immunization, with WHO and UNICEF support; 57,238 persons were covered in 2001 in the country's main towns, against 14,427 in 1998 - an increase of 150 per cent.

Fourth critical area: Human rights of women and their representation in decision-making posts

Several measures to improve the representation of women in decision-making posts have been introduced, including:

By the Government

Through the Ministry for the Advancement of Women the Government was effectively involved in the implementation of strategic measures which generated enthusiastic participation by women in the 2002 general elections and facilitated the achievement of the following positive results:

- Enhancement of women's awareness of the problems connected with elections with a view to encouraging their large-scale participation in the voting;
- Production of logos for the women candidates in the various elections and support for women candidates;
- Financing of the campaigns of women candidates.

These measures produced the results shown in table 1 (Comparison of 1992 and 2002 election results):

- Convening in Brazzaville in March 2001 of the General Conference of Congolese Women, attended by 1,000 women;
- Publication of a leaflet on the representation of women in Parliament from the first Assembly in 1959 to today;
- Organization of several informal debates on the topics “Women and power”, “Women and decision-making” and “Women and democracy” in the Maison de la Femme. These events were attended by almost 800 women;
- Training of 120 paralegal personnel;
- Production of a draft legal guide for Congolese women and girls;
- Organization of seminars on the human rights of women and girls and women’s access to decision-making in all the regions. They were attended by 5,000 women and girls;
- Conduct of informal debates in the seven administrative districts of Brazzaville and in the Parliament building on women and rights, early marriage, and inheritance. Almost 10,000 women attended.

By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- Organization of 10 legal consultations in the vicinity of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, with UNFPA support;
- Comparative study of the rights of Congolese women in relation to women in Cameroon, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with UNFPA support;
- Study on the punishment of perpetrators of violence by the courts, with UNFPA support;
- Establishment of legal clinics in Brazzaville, with back-up from the UNDP equality project. After 10 months in operation, these clinics are showing very encouraging results;
- Conduct of a seminar on the draft revision of the Family Code, with the collaboration of Congolese women lawyers;
- Conduct of an awareness-raising and training seminar in Pointe-Noire on the new business legislation, with the support of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) under the equality project. Seventy-eight businesswomen took part.
- Conduct of a seminar on raising awareness of women’s and children’s rights for the people of Nkayi (Bouenza) and Lékana (Plateaux), with governmental support under the equality project; 213 persons took part;
- Activities to boost women’s leadership capacities conducted in five resource centres located in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, Nkayi, Ouessou and Dolisie; 254 persons took part.

Against this background, an effort has been made to improve the representation of women in the decision-making spheres. An analysis of the situation between 1997 and 2002 produced the following findings:

- In the Government: 35 men and five women;
- In the civil service: 33 men and two women departmental directors;
- In the Office of the President: two women advisers out of a total of 40;
- In the civil service: only four women director-generals;

- In public enterprises: one woman director-general (of the Hydrocarbons Corporation from 1997 to 2000);
- One woman has held the post of director-general of a banking institution.
- The current situation in the Judiciary is as follows:
 - In the Supreme Court: three women members out of 21, including an advocate-general;
 - In the Court of Audit: three women members out of 11, including an advocate-general and a vice-president;
 - In the Appeals Court: five women members out of 11;
 - One woman procurator-general out of four;
 - In the courts of major jurisdiction: four women and 30 men;
 - In the six courts of minor jurisdiction in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire: one woman president (Talangai) and one woman government procurator (until 2001, in the Poto-Poto court of minor jurisdiction).
- In the media: according to recent figures, women are in a minority in the media (183 women against 412 men) as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Representation of women in the media

	Category A1 Journalist III	Category A2 Journalist II	Category C1 Auxiliary journalists	Category D1 Auxiliary journalists
Men	176	52	38	20
Women	15	9	78	26
Total	191	61	116	46

Source: Ministry Civil Service Affairs, Administrative Reform and Advancement of Women, 2002.

The diplomatic department of the Office of the Head of State has one male councillor and four attachés, including one woman. Women are under-represented in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Relations with French-Speaking States.

Personnel movements in the diplomatic service have caused the departure of one of three women directors since March 2000 (although she was promoted to the rank of first councillor in the Embassy in Ethiopia), so that there are now two women holding the post of director against 18 men. Women are also under-represented in the various other grades of the diplomatic service, as shown in tables 2 and three below.

Table 3. Representation of women in the diplomatic service

	Ambassador or	First councillor	Second councillor	Third councillor	First secretary	Second secretary	Third secretary
Men	17	36	11	1	49	16	3
Women	-	5	-	-	7	1	-
Total	17	41	11	1	56	17	3

Table 4. Representation of women in the diplomatic service

	Councillor (F.A.)	Secretary (F.A.)	Head of F.A. division	Attachés (F.A.)	Chancellor (F.A.)	Deputy chancellor
Men	51	215	18	56	34	5
Women	5	32	3	4	8	4
Total	56	247	21	60	42	9

F.A. - foreign affairs.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Relations with French-Speaking States.

In the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Congo is represented by one woman and three men.

In the African Commission on Human and People's Rights of the Organization of African Unity, one woman represented the Congo up to November 2001.

In general terms, efforts have been made both by the governmental authorities and the development partners and by civil society to secure genuine participation by women in decision-making. There is an awareness among women, increasingly organized in NGOs and other associations, of their need for education and income-generating activities as means of achieving the economic independence which is the guarantee of their participation in development.

As a result of the commitment of the President of the Republic, H.E. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, women have been accorded their rightful place in society and have been inspired with the belief that they will indeed secure an equitable part in decision-making and that their rights will be recognized.

Fifth critical area: Women and the media

In addition to the action taken in the critical areas specified in the Dakar Plan of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action, several measures have been introduced in the area of women and the media:

By the Government

- Nomination of five focal points in the key ministries in order to ensure genuine monitoring of the mainstreaming of the gender component in development plans and policies for agriculture, health, commerce, industry and the planning system. This work is continued in the other ministries;
- Participation in the training of gender focal points in Douala, Cameroon, in 2002;
- Formulation of action plans and collection of sex-disaggregated data by the focal points for transmission to the Ministry for the Advancement of Women;
- Advocacy in the various ministries to promote the mainstreaming of the gender dimension;
- Conduct of a national workshop on gender issues for women ministers, parliamentarians and senior personnel in 2002 and 2003, attended by almost 100 women.

By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- Conduct of training sessions on comparative analysis by gender in the Departments of Brazzaville, Sangha, Kouilou, Niari and Plateaux, with UNFPA support;
- Conduct of training workshops in Brazzaville for leaders of NGOs and other associations and religious organizations and for senior administrative personnel on gender and development and gender and HIV/AIDS, with UNDP support;
- Production and distribution of brochures and leaflets on gender and development;
- Conduct of studies on the inequalities between women and men, and formulation of new policies favourable to women, with regard in particular to the participation of Congolese women in development by sector of activity, with FAO and UNFPA support.

Sixth critical area: Violence and peace

(a) Violence

Several measures designed to prevent and the phenomenon of violence and eliminate it from the Congo have been taken both by the Government and by the development partners:

By the Government

- Conduct of informal debates on violence against women, attended by 688 women;
- Conduct of a survey by the Directorate for Population, in conjunction with the Directorate for the Advancement of Women, on violence against women in 1999 (1,745 cases of rape were investigated);
- Conduct of a KAP (knowledge, attitudes, practices) survey on violence against women, with UNFPA support;
- Capacity building for clinical psychologists in the psychological care of women victims of rape (eight psychologists and 20 psychological aides received training);
- Conduct of an awareness-raising seminar for officers and men of the National Police on their role in combating violence against women and girls;
- Conduct of a seminar on rape prevention;
- Conduct of an awareness-raising seminar on human rights, attended by 1,200 women;
- Organization of festivities at the district level in connection with the International Day of Tolerance, involving 600 persons;
- Screening of films on violence against women (300 persons).

By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- Organization of two Days for the exhibition and sale of *objets d'art* made by women victims of violence (220 women took part), in conjunction with Médecins sans Frontières and Rotary Club;
- Conduct of a KAP survey under the UNFPA project on promotion of the status of women concerning violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment and indecent behaviour, in the departmental chief towns and the country's other main towns.

(b) Peace

By the Government

As a prelude to the celebration of International Women's Day (8 March 1998), discussion sessions were held for women on their role in the building of lasting peace in the Congo. As a result of these sessions, four commissions were set up under the auspices of the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Congo of the Federation of African Women for Peace to deal with the following matters:

1. Collection of weapons
2. Violence against women
3. Widows and orphans
4. Refugee and displaced women

All four commissions deployed themselves throughout the country. They held working meetings with administrative, military, religious and civil authorities, at which the commissions' women proposed the following measures to:

- Collection and buy-back of illegally held weapons and their destruction;
- Organization of education sessions for young recruits on citizenship and the culture of peace;
- Installation of sports facilities and libraries to combat young peoples' idleness and provide them with beneficial leisure activities;
- Training of young people surrendering their weapons and establishment of income-generating activities;
- Conduct of religious services on peace;
- Negotiations with the Ministry of Communications to secure space for young people in the media.

These meetings were welcomed by the authorities, and the measures proposed by the women were incorporated in the programmes for the consolidation of peace in the Congo.

At the time of the events of 1997, there was only one woman on the National Mediation Committee and the International Mediation Committee in Libreville. At present, three of the four advisers in the cabinet of the Office of the High Commissioner for the Reintegration of Former Combatants are women: the economic, legal and administrative, and social and cultural advisers.

- The Department organized an informal debate as one of the events marking Pan-African Women's Day, at which a report was made on 31 July 1999 on the Zanzibar Conference on a Culture of Peace;
- At the regional women's conferences in February 2001 and the General Conference of Congolese Women in March of that year; the debates focused on the problems of peace;
- The Department and organizations of civil society took an active part in the all-inclusive national dialogue conducted in March and April 2001 which marked an important stage in the consolidation of peace in the Congo.

By bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies

- In April 1998 the Ministry responsible for women's affairs organized with backing from UNESCO a seminar on arrangements for establishing an active network of NGOs and

women's associations to work for unity, national reconciliation and progress towards a culture of peace;

- Two women were members of the mediation committee set up in connection with the events of 1998:
 - In 1998 the Ministry for the Advancement of Women organized with UNFPA support a seminar on equality of rights, with a view to reducing the number of violations of women's human rights;
 - On 1 June 1998 the Ministry and the International Rescue Committee conducted a seminar on sexual violence in order to make women more aware of their rights and equip them to defend themselves better;
- Under the "Promotion of peace" component of phase I of the UNDP project on equality between women and men, the Department organized in Brazzaville and a number of the regional chief towns:
 - Sports tournaments for young people;
 - Mega rap concerts, following which a young rap band would come on stage to argue the cause of peace, tolerance and non-violence.

B. Examples of obstacles encountered and remaining gaps and challenges

1. In the fight against poverty

(a) Obstacles

Several constraints have been identified in the fight against poverty:

- Women's lack of access to land, inputs and bank loans;
- Lack of means of processing, conserving and storing agricultural and fisheries products;
- Scant financial resources allocated to women's activities;
- Lack of sex-disaggregated statistics;
- Poor capacity of the systems for the collection, movement and marketing of agricultural and fisheries products owing to the bad condition of roads and farm tracks;
- Women's lack of access to new information and communications technologies;
- Lack of training for women and their illiteracy.

(b) Remaining challenges

- The search for funding to build up women's production, managerial, promotional and educational capacities with a view enhancing to their independence;
- The provision to women of quality agricultural and fisheries equipment and appropriate inputs and technologies in order to alleviate the harshness of their work and increase their productivity and output;
- The establishment of women's savings and loans banks in all parts of the country;
- Technical and technological capacity building by training women in cooperative business methods.

2. In education

(a) Obstacles

Despite the efforts of the State to boost school attendance by girls by increasing its spending on basic education and the measures to combat illiteracy, there has been a rise in the number of illiterates, especially among women and girls. This situation is due to several constraints:

- The lack of enthusiasm and will on the part of girls themselves;
- The burden of culture: women abandon school at a very early stage because they are ruled by traditional customs and prejudices which consign them to domestic work and marriage;
- Education in the family: girls are brought up differently from boys; they have to support their mothers in caring for their younger brothers and have little time for leisure or studying;
- The stereotypes presented in school textbooks depict girls as subordinate and dependent, and this image is interiorized by girls themselves;
- Parents' own illiteracy induces them to neglect their educational role;
- Economic crises and family poverty have a bigger impact on girls than on boys;
- Sexual harassment is another factor causing girls to abandon school;
- The lack of sex education in the family and in the schools contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;
- The succession of wars and the violence inflicted on girls are further reasons why girls abandon school;
- Early marriage in rural areas with the consequent early pregnancies.

(b) Remaining challenges

- Advocacy for the adoption of new education and training policies giving particular attention to girls, especially at the primary level;
- Advocacy for the introduction of adult literacy programmes in the legal, economic and political fields, with a view to improving basic standards of literacy;
- Establishment of small libraries in rural areas and other localities to give women opportunities for reading and writing so that they do not relapse into illiteracy;
- Establishment of women's centres in towns and large villages;
- Establishment of functional literacy centres;
- Introduction of awareness-raising, information and leadership measures for girls related to the conduct of social and economic activities, with a view to enhancing their independence;
- Introduction of further training for women teachers in order to strengthen their professional capabilities and make the subjects of science and technology more attractive and accessible to women and girls;
- Organization of "open-doors days" and seminars on sex education for young people, especially girls, in order to reduce the number of drop-outs from school and university.

3. With regard to health

(a) Obstacles

The obstacles may be summed up as follows:

- The inadequacy of the health infrastructure in rural areas;

- The impoverishment of families and women's weak purchasing power, which put health care beyond the reach of many families;
- The significant cuts in the health budgets;
- The inaccessibility of sources of drinking water;
- The shortage and poor distribution of qualified personnel country-wide;
- Poor social security and nutritional health;
- Shortage of women in senior posts in the health system;

(b) Remaining challenges

In order to improve the present situation, if only by a little, the following challenges must be taken up:

- Formulation of a population policy;
- Injection of fresh energy into the measures to combat STIs and HIV/AIDS;
- Advocacy for reduction of the incidence of early pregnancies and STIs among adolescents and for increased use of the available sexual and reproductive health and family planning services;
- Reinforcement of the measures for the prevention of endemic diseases (measles, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, etc.).

4. With regard to the environment

(a) Obstacles

- Failure to involve women effectively in environmental matters;
- People's lack of awareness of environmental issues;
- Absence of collection services for household wastes;
- Abusive deforestation and insufficient reforestation;
- Failure to keep livestock penned;
- Inadequate publicity for environmental programmes with the general public;
- Defects of the public sanitation system;
- Shortage of drinking water in rural areas;
- Impact of pollution, including sound pollution, on people in general and women in particular;
- Failure to observe the rules of basic hygiene.

(b) Remaining challenges

- Advocacy with the development agencies with a view to mobilizing resources and carrying out the planned measures;
- Mobilization of sufficient resources to promote environmental activities;
- Reinforcement of women's capacity to deal with environmental issues;
- Dissemination of suitable technologies for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems by the population;
- Continued installation of drinking water points for urban and rural communities;
- Organization of awareness-raising campaigns on hygiene in general and environmental hygiene in particular, community afforestation work, and the need to change dietary habits.

5. In the media

(a) Obstacles

- Lack of a national gender policy;
- Women's lack of access to the Internet and new information and communications technologies;
- Shortage of audiovisual materials and information technology tools in the media;
- Absence of women from decision-making posts in the media;
- Scant resources allocated to media activities.

(b) Remaining challenges

- Formulation of a national gender policy;
- Continuation of the establishment of focal points in the ministries which are not yet involved in the programme for monitoring and evaluation of the African Plan of Action;
- Creation of a high-level agency for gender issues to monitor the implementation of the action plans and the Beijing Platform for Action;
- Strengthening of the capacities of the staff of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women and officials of NGOs and other associations to analyse plans from the gender standpoint;
- Advocacy with policy-makers and leaders of public opinion on the gender issue;
- Capacity building among senior women journalists with a view to improving women's representation in decision-making posts in the media;
- Effective involvement of women journalists in activities for the advancement of women by increasing the amount of broadcasting on women's issues;
- Promotion of rural community radio stations;
- Use of signing for deaf and hearing-impaired persons in media activities.

6. With regard to violence

(a) Obstacles

There are many obstacles in this area, including:

- The social and political unrest;
- The obsolescence of certain provisions and the gaps and omissions in the Criminal, Family and General Taxation Codes;
- The burden of custom, which places men above women on the social scale;
- Women's ignorance of the fundamental human rights and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Unfamiliarity with the procedures of the legal system;
- Lack of reception facilities for women victims of violence.

(b) Remaining challenges

- Establishment of reception facilities for women victims of violence and expansion of the existing ones;
- Advocacy for the adoption of new legislation and effective application of the existing legislation on the rights of Congolese women;
- Expansion of training on the question of violence against women for members of the forces of law and order and the social and medical services;

- Intensification of the awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of women victims of violence;
- Capacity building for social and health agencies.

7. With regard to peace

(a) Obstacles

- Absence of a culture of peace and tolerance;
- Economic difficulties;
- Impoverishment of families.

(b) Remaining challenges

- Increased involvement of women in the peace negotiations;
- Reinforcement of women's economic power;
- Conduct of more seminars on a culture of peace;
- Intensification of awareness-raising campaigns in the media on the role of parents in providing education in a culture of peace;
- Promotion of women's effective participation in decision-making in all activities connected with the maintenance of peace.

C. Lessons learned

Significant progress has been made since the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000 thanks to the Government's political commitment, the efforts made by women themselves and the support provided by bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies.

Despite the many obstacles encountered on the way, Congolese women are becoming aware of their role as stakeholders in and beneficiaries of development, as well as of their responsibilities in all areas of life.

Moreover, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women has been deeply impressed by the vigour of the women's movement. In fact, more than 500 women's groups, associations and NGOs are working in partnership with the Ministry to promote social, economic and cultural activities, thus helping to satisfy women's needs.

Women's representation in decision-making bodies remains generally poor, but there has been a clear improvement in this respect in the Executive and the Legislature. Big efforts are still required in the Judiciary and the civil service.

With regard to violence against women, intensive education and awareness-raising efforts must be made with members of the forces of law and order and with boys and girls in order to reduce the incidence of acts of violence. The capacities of the facilities for caring for the victims must be boosted and their coverage extended to the whole country; and the justice system must be reformed by way of the adoption of legislation for the protection of women victims of violence.

It must be noted that women have made an enormous contribution to the restoration and maintenance of peace in the Congo and have been closely involved in all the measures for the

establishment of a lasting peace. However, further efforts are needed to secure women's full participation in decision-making in all the activities connected with the maintenance of peace.

Despite the efforts made to combat poverty, which have produced fairly satisfactory results, special attention still needs to be given to the reinforcement of women's capacities with regard to techniques for the production, processing, packaging and marketing of agricultural and fisheries products, as well as to the management of their activities.

In fact, the various programmes must be backed by considerable amounts of financial support. The Government is endeavouring to mobilize the necessary resources.

In view of women's poor access to traditional bank loans, the experiment with women's savings and loans banks warrants support and extension to the whole country.

Where education is concerned, despite the implementation of several measures to eliminate female illiteracy, it must be said that the situation remains worrying; hence the need to boost the literacy programmes for women and girls at all levels.

The Government is seeking to improve the access of all categories of women to the media by broadcasting programmes on all the national channels. However, an effort must be made to eliminate the stereotypes which convey a negative image of women in the various programmes. Furthermore, women's capacity vis-à-vis the media must be bolstered.

Although women believe in and contribute to the protection of the environment, there are very few women in a position to take decisions on environmental issues.

Despite the efforts made by the governmental authorities to improve the health of all population groups, owing to their disadvantaged circumstances women find access to quality health care difficult. It should also be stressed that the measures for the prevention of STIs, HIV/AIDS and sexual violence and to promote immunization and reproductive health measures must be reinforced.

Several obstacles have been encountered in the implementation of the measures planned for girls, especially with regard to protecting their rights and fostering their general development. Steps must be taken to disseminate information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Lastly, the lack of monitoring arrangements and the paucity of the funds allocated to the advancement of women make it difficult to assess the progress accurately.

PART THREE: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Part Three furnishes information on all the institutional mechanisms and arrangements put in place for the support and monitoring of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing+5) and on all the obstacles encountered, the progress made and the remaining challenges.

Question (a)

The existing mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Congo include:

1. Policies
2. Legal instruments
3. Institutional tools

The policies include:

- The Government's "Nouvelle Espérance" (New Hope) programme;
- The National Policy for the Advancement of Women adopted on 15 December 1999 and the updated Plan of Action 2000-2002;

The legal instruments include:

- The Constitution of 20 January 2002 (art. 8);
- The judicial mechanisms for the protection of women established by the national legislation investing women with the right to institute legal proceedings;
- The conventions, covenants and charters ratified by the Congo and applicable in the Congolese legal system.

The institutional mechanisms include:

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and the Advancement of Women, which has a Secretary of State responsible for the advancement of women and their integration in development;
- The Centre for Research, Information and Documentation on Women (CRDIF);
- The departmental gender focal points, whose task is to ensure the mainstreaming of the gender dimension in the 10 governmental departments;
- The specific projects designed to enhance the status of women;
 - Phases I and II of the UNDP project "Promotion of equality between women and men";
 - The FAO "Telefood" project on strengthening of women's economic capacities in fish-curing;
 - The UNFPA project on support for promotion of the status of women;
 - The UNICEF project on capacity building for women;
 - The WHO/UNAIDS project on an operational sectoral plan to combat HIV/AIDS;
- The women's networks, including the National Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians;
- The women's group in Parliament;
- The committee of women parliamentarians;
- The women's NGOs and other associations and groups.

(a) The resources available to these entities include:

- Financial resources (from the State budget and/or donors);
- Human resources, in particular national personnel and international experts.

The terms of office of these entities are:

- Seven years for the Government;
- Five years for Parliament.

The women's group in Parliament and the Minister responsible for women's affairs work in close collaboration through the National Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians on questions connected with the improvement of the status of women.

This Network oversees the implementation and monitoring of measures to improve the status of women. It is funded by members of Parliament from their own resources and by agencies of the United Nations system.

The women's group in Parliament is financed by the Government, the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) and UNDP.

(b) The "gender equality and empowerment of women" contact groups are represented within the ministries by the following focal points: agriculture, health, commerce and trade, industry and planning.

This work is continued in the ministries which are not yet involved in the programmes for monitoring and evaluating the African Plan of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Support is provided by these ministries to ensure the genuine mainstreaming of the gender dimension in their programmes and development plans (advice, funds, projects, etc.).

(c) The institutional mechanisms for project monitoring and evaluation have already been identified (under question (a) above).

There is close collaboration between the focal points and the Department for the Advancement of Women. The notion of gender is still relatively new, but the gender dimension is gaining ground in the ministries' various programmes.

(d) The following measures have been introduced in order to mainstream the gender dimension at the departmental level:

- The creation of a service to conduct studies on poverty and gender in the Directorate for Planning and Development of the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Economic Integration, the Government's technical agency for the formulation of development plans and programmes;
- The reformulation of the National Policy for the Advancement of Women;
- The revision of the administrative procedures of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade from the gender perspective;

- The formulation of the operational sectoral plan to combat HIV/AIDS, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, which mainstreams the gender dimension in that Ministry, with WHO support;
- The establishment of an office for the mainstreaming of the gender approach in development with a view to strengthening the coordination role of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women.

(e) Indicators have been established by the ministerial committees as part of the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Study and planning offices responsible for data collection and monitoring and evaluating the various programmes do exist, but the following obstacles have been encountered:

- Most of the data are not sex-disaggregated owing to the failure to take the gender perspective into account;
- Sex-disaggregated data is not available from the National Centre for Statistics and Economic Studies (CNSEE).

These are the remaining challenges:

- Formulation and adoption of national gender policies;
- Persuading the CNSEE to create a mechanism to produce sex-disaggregated data.

(f) Parliament plays a fundamental role, through the committee of women parliamentarians, in the promotion and monitoring of gender equality and the empowerment of women, engaging inter alia in advocacy for the adoption of legislation on equality between men and women. Similar advocacy is conducted by the National Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians.

In addition to their involvement in the implementation of the various plans and programmes, NGOs play an important role in monitoring the activities; they have proved themselves true partners of the mechanisms established to follow up on the Fourth World Conference on Women by participating in the various phases of the implementation of the Platform for Action.

PART FOUR: MAIN CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

An analysis of the situation of Congolese women reveals the inequalities in their access to loans, modern technologies, inputs, training and information, education (only six per cent of the 58 per cent of girls who enrol in school reach university, and 64 per cent of women are illiterate) and quality health care (890 deaths per 100,000 live births). More women than men are living with HIV/AIDS (30.2 and 21 per cent respectively): in 2000-2002 the outpatients treatment centre in Brazzaville diagnosed 1,152 male cases and 1,520 female. Women's poor representation in decision-making bodies is illustrated below:

- Government: 14.7 per cent;
- Senate: 15 per cent;
- Constitutional Court: 11 per cent;
- Economic and Social Council: 36 per cent;
- Higher Council on Freedom of Communication: nine per cent
- National Human Rights Commission: 33.3 per cent;
- Supreme Court of Justice: 13.8 per cent;
- Local councils: 8.55 per cent.

Despite the formal recognition of the principle of equality between men and women in national legislation (Constitution, General Taxation Code, Criminal Code, Family Code, etc.), discrimination still persists in its application, especially with respect to moral and physical violence (rape, beating, etc.), and works against the advancement of women, who after all make up 52 per cent of the population.

In addition, the absence of sex-disaggregated data, due to the lack of studies and research on women, presents an obstacle to the mainstreaming of the female component in development plans and programmes.

The remaining challenges are found in the following areas: poverty, education, health, violence, decision-making, and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. The various areas for action, the objectives to be attained, and the time-frames are set out in the table below.

	Areas	Objectives	Time-frame
1	Women and poverty	- Strengthening of women's capacity to organize, develop and manage independent and sustainable means of subsistence - Creation of conditions to facilitate women's access to resources (loans, land, inputs) - Alleviation of the harshness of women's work	2004-2009
2	Education and training for women	- Reduction of girls' drop-out rate and promotion of their social and vocational integration - Increase of 10 per cent in the literacy rate for women and girls	2004-2009
3	Health	- Improvement of the health and nutrition of mother and child - Reduction of the spread of STIs, HIV/AIDS and	2004-2009

		malaria	
4	Violence	- Reduction and elimination of violence against women	2004-2009
5	Armed conflicts	- Development of a culture of peace and tolerance	2004-2009
6	Decision-making	- Increased representation of women by some 20 to 30 per cent at least - Integration of the gender perspective in development policies and programmes at all levels	2004-2009
7	Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women	- Consolidation of the mechanisms for the advancement of women and creation of new ones - Production and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation purposes	2004-2009
8	Human rights	- Promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls	2004-2009
9	Women and the media	- Promotion of a balanced and non-stereotyped image of women in the media - Reinforcement of women's role in the media	2004-2009
10	Women and the environment	- Promotion of women's active participation in decision-making on questions of environmental protection	2004-2009

CONCLUSION

In the light of the review of the situation contained in this document, it may be said that the past five years have seen increasingly visible and clear action by the Government with respect to the representation of women in the concert of the Congolese nation. The achievements of this period and the foundations laid in the vast social workshop constituted by the advancement of women must be consolidated and reinforced.

It is a question of pursuing this action in order to reverse the current trend towards the marginalization of women and to secure increased participation by women in the national development process.

Done in Brazzaville on

Secretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and the Advancement of Women having responsibility for the advancement of women and their integration in development

Jeanne Françoise LECKOMBA LOUMETO
