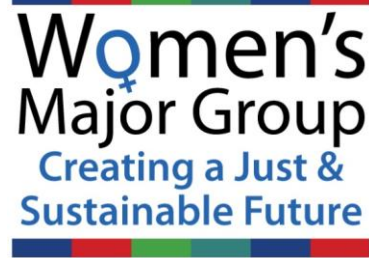




**The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network**



Thank you for the floor Chair. I am Nebila Abdulmelik with FEMNET and the Womens Major Group speaking on Africa. I hope that we all appreciate this tall task considering the diversity of realities across and within the more than 50 states that make up this beautiful continent. As the brief mentioned, Africa is home to LDCs, LLDCs, SIDs and MICs.

A number of our countries have registered double digit growth over the past 10 years or so. However, we are concerned that this growth hasn't yielded full, decent employment that provides living wages, benefits and social protection mechanisms, meaning that the growth has not translated into real change in people's lives and has in fact exacerbated gender, spatial and income inequalities. Measures put in place to remedy this must be people centred with the most marginalized at the center and equity, justice and rights based.

Land grabs, sometimes dubbed large scale land acquisitions are taking place at alarming levels, often displacing local communities, without their prior, informed consent and coupled with the patenting of seeds undermining local and indigenous knowledge systems, all of which threaten food sovereignty and ultimately the livelihoods of millions, which is particularly troubling with estimates of one in four who go hungry on a daily basis.

All forms of sexual and gender based violence, which are among the most pervasive human rights violations and which have irreversible socio-economic implications must be eliminated. This is particularly pertinent considering that 120 million girls in our region have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting. Additionally, every year a country the size of Zimbabwe, 14 million, is created solely composed of child brides, some as young as 5. One out of three girls and women face violence in their lifetime. Although Africa has seen a decline in maternal mortality, the figure of 440 women dying daily is unacceptably high. These statistics are unacceptable and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

As UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile said yesterday on the occasion of Human Rights Day, 'Madiba showed us that none of us are free unless all of us are free. Our hopes for a just, equitable, safe and peaceful world can only be achieved when there is universal respect for the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family'.

I thank you.

December 11, 2013

OWG6, Countries in Special Needs