

Third meeting of the executive committee of women parliamentarians in Africa and Arab world, Khartoum, Sudan, February 8,2014

Final Communiqué

Womenfolk in Africa and Arab world seek for socio-economic, political and cultural development. To this end, they harness their intellectual and financial potential.

Accordingly, under the auspices of H.E Ambali Abdullah Al-Ajab Ambali, Speaker of Council of States of Sudan, ASSECAA's executive committee of women parliamentarians held its third meeting in Khartoum, Sudan , on Saturday, February 8, 2014.

Delegates from Sudan, Gabon, Yemen, Bahrain, and Morocco attended the event. Also in attendance were ASSECAA's secretary general Mr. Abdul Wasie Yusuf Ali and Arab League's envoy Mr. Tamir Sulieman, lawmakers, government officials, diplomats and representatives from civil society organizations.

The executive committee also held another meeting at the headquarters of Council of States of Sudan on Sunday , February 9, 2014.

H.E Badawi Al-Khair Edris, Deputy Speaker of Council of States of Sudan, gave a speech in which he welcomed delegates on behalf of the President of the Republic of Sudan, the Speaker of Council of States of Sudan, and the Chairman of the national legislative authority. He lauded ASSECAA for carving out a role for women, and serving as a bridge of communication between Africa and Arab world. He stressed the importance of unifying Africa and Arab world in order to heal the rift occasioned by colonialism, pointing out that the two regions are witnessing uprisings and transformations, which necessitates that women should assume a vital role in reducing the effects of such upheavals. Edris confirmed that the Sudanese women have asserted themselves in terms of taking up legislative, political and executive positions, expressing hope that they would have their rights provided for in the upcoming constitution.

He called for implementing the recommendations from the previous meetings, which have to do with the socio-economic and political empowerment of women as well as their engagement in national action. He , in conclusion, appealed for increasing the executive committee's membership to include all womenfolk in Africa and Arab world.

Madam Ablah Al-Mahdi, Chairperson of ASSECAA's executive committee on women parliamentarians in Africa and Arab world, gave a speech in which she welcomed the committee members , pointing out that the meeting is being held in line with the tasks assigned to the committee, and with an aim to empower Arab and African women economically, politically, socially and culturally.

She highlighted that the get-together also seeks to formulate an action plan for implementing the recommendations and resolutions from the previous meetings and conferences, in addition to setting up a panel to be composed of the Association's General Secretariat and Executive office, and some women lawmakers, in order to follow upon the execution of such recommendations.

She also noted that the event seeks to enhance intellectual cooperation, eliminate conflicts, fight corruption, consolidate transparency and accountability, promote and upgrade women-related legislation, and create the conducive environment for women's participation in decision-making, in addition to encouraging dialogue amongst civilizations and religions , and propagating peaceful co-existence among peoples.

ASSECAA's Secretary General, Abdul Wasie Yusuf Ali, for his part, delivered a speech in which he welcomed the delegates to the meeting, expressing his deep gratitude to the government of Sudan for the warm reception and generous hospitality accorded to delegates. He pointed out that the Association seeks to encourage the participation of women in politics and to empower them politically, economically and culturally, and to project their pioneering role in the two regions.

He confirmed that such meetings are intended to exchange experiences among participants and to lay down programs and strategies,

noting that the absence of good governance has resulted in women and children being deprived of their basic rights, increased rates of poverty, unemployment, backwardness and displacement.

He urged the executive committee on women parliamentarians to formulate its own regulations, and to form a committee to be assigned with addressing women's issues besides visualizing short-and-long term programs that would help women absorb their rights. He stated that both men and women should play a complementary role, and that equal opportunities should be offered to both genders in order to enable them to achieve the desired success.

The committee then held its meeting that later resolved into two subcommittees: the first was composed of Sudan and Bahrain, while the second consisted of Gabon and Yemen. The two panels extensively deliberated upon the recommendations from the previous women lawmakers' meetings held in Abuja and Khartoum. Accordingly, the two bodies came up with the following recommendations:

A-on Political and legislative front:

- 1-There is need for Arab and African governments to lend political support to women to enable them engage in decision-making.
- 2-There is need that the Association lays down special regulations for the committee of women parliamentarians.
- 3-It is necessary that the Association sets out an action plan, or hold a conference and/or undertake a program to discuss the political empowerment of women in such a way as to review the experiences of member countries, while taking into account the experiences of individual member countries.
- 4-That parliaments be urged to support women delegates to international parliamentary forums in order to legislatively empower them and build their legislative capacities.
- 5-There is need that women parliamentarians in ASSECAA's member states exchange parliamentary visits to compare notes and share legislative experiences of these countries.

-Engage women in all ASSECAA's committees as well as the delegations to the association's activities.

-Educate society on the importance of women's roles and potentials.

-Integrate women's needs into the state's general budget.

-Urge member countries to hammer out a clear work-plan for the empowerment of women.

On socio-economic and cultural front

1-Urge member countries to provide ASSECAA with general statistics on women's economic empowerment as well as the number of women working for the private and public sector , in addition to private businesses ventures.

2-There is need that women parliamentarians be represented in ASSECAA's meetings.

3- Urge countries to provide gratuitous health services for pregnant women and children less than five years of age in Africa and Arab world.

4--Urge member states to intensify their efforts to fight the Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), malaria and tuberculosis.

5-Impress upon Arab and African governments the need to hammer out mechanisms for reducing the spike in maternal and child mortality rates.

6- Training and workshops

1-Organize training courses for members of ASSECAA's committee on women parliamentarians to enable them acquire legislative and parliamentary skills.

3-Hold a workshop on the solutions that must be provided to the problems related to maternal care and noxious habits.

4-Work towards establishing a center for monitoring women's conditions.

5-Work towards issuing annual periodical and newsletters on women's issues.

6-The meeting approved a work-plan for the executive committee of women parliamentarians for the years 2014-2015.

Recommendations from Bahrain

-Hold a workshop for the purpose of laying out a mechanism for reactivating the laws on the political empowerment of women and their engagement in decision-making.

Recommendation from Sudan

-Organize a workshop on the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its negative effects on Africa and Arab world.

Recommendation from Yemen:

-Hold a workshop on the economic empowerment of women, fighting corruption amongst womenfolk, and elimination of all forms of backwardness.

Recommendation from Gabon:

-Organize a workshop on the mechanisms of protecting women against all forms of violence.

-Formulate a subcommittee on peace and security in Africa and Arab world within ASSECAA's committee on women parliamentarians, The chairperson of the subcommittee shall appointed by Morocco, while her deputy shall be named by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

-Hold a workshop on peace and security in Africa and Arab world.

-Organize a workshop for the purpose of conducting a comparative study on women's and child legislation in Africa and Arab world.

Resolutions:

The meeting hereby resolved:

1. That the action plan of the Executive Committee of women parliamentarians for 2014- 2015 be approved, and that a workshop be held every six months in any of ASSECAA's member states.
2. That the plan be circulated to all member countries of the Association of Senates and Shura and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab world.

3. That the plan be submitted to the Association's next Conference set to be held in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in April 2014, so as to approve a budgetary allocation for the implementation of the blueprint.

4. That the Association be requested organize the meetings of the committee of women parliamentarians on the sidelines of the meetings and conferences to be organized by the Association.

Khartoum, February, 2014