

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

P. O. Box 3243

Telephone: 517 700

Fax: 5130 36

website: www.africa-union.org

ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION
Seventeenth Ordinary Session
30 June – 1 July 2011
Malabo, EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Assembly/AU/12 (XVII) Add.5
Original: French

**SUPPORT TO THE DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE 66TH ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANISATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROHIBITING FEMALE
GENITAL MUTILATION WORLDWIDE**
(Item proposed by Burkina Faso)

**SUPPORT TO THE DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE 66TH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
PROHIBITING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION WORLDWIDE**

(Item proposed by Burkina Faso)

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. Despite all the efforts deployed for over two decades towards elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the world, nearly three million little girls still face the risk of undergoing FGM each year, according to World Health Organization.

2. In his report published on 2 October 2009, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, indicated that about 91.5 million young girls under nine (9) years of age grapple with the consequences of Female Genital Mutilation.

3. To combat this social phenomenon which is harmful to women, African civil society organizations have brought to the public domain the issue of FGM, hitherto regarded as taboo. The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC) is among the precursors of the struggle being waged in the Continent in this area. Chaired by Burkina Faso since 2008, the IAC, thanks to its national committees in 28 States, has undertaken tremendous advocacy and awareness-raising work at both national and regional levels.

4. In this regard, the initiatives of various stakeholders and, more importantly, their political commitment over the years, resulted in the adoption, in 2003, of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (better known as the Maputo Protocol). Among the extremely important provisions of this Protocol to protect and guarantee the rights of women, Article 5 explicitly requires African States to take all the necessary national political and legislative measures to eliminate female genital mutilation. So far, a majority of the concerned African States has implemented policies to combat female genital mutilation and 19 of them have enacted legislation prohibiting and condemning the practice.

5. Burkina Faso where FGMs are practiced to the tune of 49.5% has made the fight against the practice a political priority at the highest level. The Burkinabè State has embarked upon an intensive combat by creating a National Council to stem the practice of female genital mutilation. Through this body, the country has implemented numerous purposeful actions, in particular, the enactment and application of a national law prohibiting and condemning FGM; the promotion of a wide-ranging popularization and public enlightenment campaign on the legislation; the training of detective police officers, public security staff, military and para-military officers; the establishment of a telephone hot line to prevent and denounce the practice of FGM; the institution of systematic judicial proceedings in case of FGM; the introduction of FGM educational modules in primary, secondary and technical schools; reparations for the outcomes of excision; and social mobilization involving religious and traditional leaders, as well as leaders of youth and women's organizations.

Despite the efforts invested in this endeavour by several State and inter-State players, the expected results are still far from being achieved.

6. Therefore, to put an end to the sufferings endured each year by millions of young girls on account of this practice, actions at continental and global levels need to be enhanced as a matter of urgency through engagement of the international community at large. We are today convinced that we cannot curb this cultural practice which belongs to another age without concerted action at regional and international levels. This will in particular make it possible to thwart the cross border practice of female gender mutilation and thus stem the extension of the phenomenon.

7. It is for this reason that Burkina Faso and Egypt with other countries took the initiative to launch a global campaign at the level of the United Nations to push for the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution prohibiting female genital mutilation world-wide. This initiative, coordinated by the First Lady of Burkina Faso, Madam Chantal Compaoré, Goodwill Ambassador for IAC, supported by other African First Ladies, reflects the sterling political commitment of Africans to tackle this crucial issue head-on.

8. The draft resolution seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Strengthen the political will of States to combat all forms of violation of the fundamental rights of women and girls;
- Establish and implement the mechanisms needed to enlighten, raise awareness, prevent and crack down on the practice of female genital mutilation at national level;
- Harmonize the tools and mechanisms for combating female genital mutilation;
- Ratify and implement the regional and international instruments for combating FGM, in particular the Maputo Protocol;
- Ensure adequate resource allocation for implementation of the legislation and the national and regional action plans geared to eliminating female genital mutilation.

9. In view of the aforesaid, adoption of a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly prohibiting female genital mutilation world-wide will represent an important step towards the full application of the provisions of the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The African Union as a whole should make it a point to support this initiative which will only enhance the mainstreaming of the interest of women and girls across the world.

**Assembly/AU/12 (XVII) Add.5
Annex**

FACTSHEET

SUBJECT: STATUS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN AFRICA

Factsheet

Subject: Status of Female Genital Mutilation in Africa.

I. Situation

Female genital mutilation is a practice harmful to the health of women and children and involves 28 African countries.

This African problem is worrying and still relevant.

It is estimated that in the world, 100 to 140 million girls and women are victims of female genital mutilation and nearly 3 million women and girls are at risk to undergo the practice each year in Africa.

The forms and prevalence vary from one community to another and from one country to another.

There are three main groups of countries according to the proportion of women mutilated:

1. Countries where women are mutilated in large majority, with a prevalence of more than 85%. Nine countries in this group are Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan.
2. Countries where the proportion varies according to ethnic group, social class and generation; only some sections of the population are affected, a total of between 25% and 85% of women are mutilated. This is the case of nine countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Kenya, Senegal and Chad.
3. Countries where only a few ethnic minorities are involved and where the proportion of circumcised women is below 25%: Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Togo.

The reasons for the practice of female genital mutilation vary from one community to another. From the rite of passage into womanhood, to the guarantee of a good marriage, the practice of female genital mutilation is based, in all cases, on ancestral traditions.

The use of religion was widespread to justify the large scale practice of female genital mutilation in both Muslim and Christian communities.

The consequences on the health of women and children can be devastating both in terms of complications from FGM and the after-effects in the more or less long term in the life of the victim.

The practice of FGM can particularly impact negatively on and hinder the participation of women in the process of social, economic and cultural development of their countries and thus prevent the full attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

II. Mapped-out strategies and actions

On the African continent, several approaches, mainly focused on information and awareness campaigns, capacity building programmes for stakeholders, research and advocacy, have been developed by NGOs, associations and governmental institutions.

III. Results obtained

- Lifting the taboo of silence around the issue;
- Social mobilization (community involved in public statements of abandonment and the dumping of knives by excisors ...);
- Involvement of religious and traditional leaders (creation of African religious leaders network);
- Involvement of parliamentarians (Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Dakar);
- Youth engagement (creation of an African Youth network);
- Involvement of women (through mobilization of associations and NGOs for interest and support in the fight);
- Political commitment: manifested by,
 - The establishment of policies, programmes and action plans to fight for the elimination of female genital mutilation;
 - Establishment of frameworks for consultation and actions;
 - Provision of financial, material and human resources;
 - Adoption of laws against FGM in 19 countries out of 28 (in 1965 Guinea, Central African Republic in 1996, Ghana and Djibouti in 1994, in 1996 Burkina Faso, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Tanzania in 1998, Eritrea in 2007, Egypt 2008, Uganda in 2009, Benin in 2003, Niger in

2002, Senegal in 1999, Kenya in 2001, Ethiopia in 2005, Nigeria and Chad.)

In the regional context, the commitment of the state has been strengthened by the adoption of two main instruments namely, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights with its Additional Protocol on the Rights of Women, called the Maputo Protocol.

The Maputo Protocol remains, until that date, the only binding regional instrument to recognize female genital mutilation as a violation of women's rights and adopt legislative and policy measures to eliminate it.

In addition, the Solemn Declaration of African Heads of States on equality between men and women strengthens this African position.

The phenomenon of global migration has also helped to spread the practice of FGM in many countries outside Africa. Studies have recently shown the existence of the practice in the Middle East and South America.

It therefore seems imperative to provide prompt global response to this social scourge.

It is in this light that the draft decision proposed by Burkina Faso for concerted action by African countries will strengthen Africa's voice for a resolution banning female genital mutilation.

A UN General Assembly resolution will ensure harmonization of tools and control mechanisms existing in Africa and elsewhere; constitute an instrument to highlight the seriousness of FGM as a violation of human rights of women and also be the expression of global solidarity.

2011-06-30

Support to the draft resolution of the 66th ordinary session of the general assembly of the organisation of the United Nations prohibiting female genital mutilation worldwide (Item proposed by Burkina Faso)

Africa union

Africa union

<http://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/5480>

Downloaded from African Union Common Repository