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## Africa: Accountability Key to Meeting National Gender Equality Goals, Says UN Report

20 February 2009

Strengthening accountability for commitments made by governments will be vital to achieving gender equality and women's rights, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

"The actions of those in power need to be reviewed and made accountable to women," Hanny Cueva-Beteta, Data and Statistics Specialist with UNIFEM, stressed today at the launch in Monrovia, Liberia, of the agency's flagship publication, Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009.

The report, entitled "Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability," pointed to vast gaps in accountability between men and women, which lead to weakened participation of women in the formal sector, according to a news release issued by UNIFEM.

Ms. Cueva-Beteta said that in areas such as conflict mediation, women's priorities are silenced and war crimes committed against them are often not prosecuted.

In both national governments and multilateral organizations, accountability systems need to be changed and oriented to answer to women, if commitments to gender equality are to move from rhetoric to results, she stated.

"It is time to move from lip-service to real results," she said, adding that commitments made by governments should be accompanied by funding and planning.

There is still a long way to go in that regard, she noted, given that women are outnumbered 4 to 1 in legislatures around the world; over 60 per cent of all unpaid family workers globally are women; and about one-third of women suffer gender-based violence during their lives.

Also speaking at the launch, Liberia's President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, highlighted some of achievements made in her country towards women's empowerment. They include the establishment of a special "Criminal Court E," dedicated to gender-based violence crimes with an emphasis on rape, and an empowerment programme, funded by the Nike Foundation, for 1,500 adolescent girls.

There is also the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, which the President set up to support girls' education and improving markets for women.

Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf thanked UNIFEM for its efforts in getting countries to make greater commitments towards the empowerment of women and implored those at the launch to "join hands at all levels and work together for the enhancement of women as a means of acting towards the development of society as a whole."

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