

PRESS RELEASE

The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC) held its 7th General Assembly/ International Conference with the theme “Partnering with the Media to reach Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)”

Addis Ababa, November 5, 2008 - Over 150 participants from 26 African countries, Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, New Zealand and the United States of America, attended IAC's 7th General Assembly/ International Conference, which took place in Cairo, Egypt from October 27 to 30, 2008.

The First Lady of Egypt, H.E. Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak officially opened the conference. In her opening speech, Mrs. Mubarak praised “the work that IAC is undertaking to assist many African societies, in terms of gender parity, peace and development” She also stated: “IAC has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering values to dispel gender biases, promote education and leadership, as well as instill human rights values in the fight against FGM in the African continent”.

Mrs Berhane Ras-Work, the Executive Director of IAC, declared categorically that “harmful traditional practices are losing their grips on the populace, as more and more women are standing up and claiming their God-given rights to their bodily integrity as created in His image”. Mrs Ras-Work commended the First Ladies who have become vanguards in the campaign against FGM.

H.E. Mrs Henriette Conte, the First Lady of the Republic of Guinea and IAC Goodwill Ambassador addressed in her speech the extolled values IAC stands for. She pledged for continuous support.

The African Union, represented by Mrs. Yetunde Teriba, Gender Directorate, recalled the important role that IAC played in the development of The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the rights of women.

Solidarity messages were delivered by several IAC partners, such as H.E. Mrs Chantal Compaore, First Lady of Burkina Faso and IAC Goodwill Ambassador, the Economic

Commission for Africa (ECA), African Centre for Gender and Social development, the Office of Human Rights of the Department of Institutions of Geneva, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and WHO.

IAC National Committee delegates and Group Sections reported on the activities carried out. In three panel sessions the media, the youth and religious leaders harped on the synergy needed to eliminate FGM and other harmful tradition practices within the time frame of 2010 according to the Common Agenda.

The conference adopted a 4-year plan of action and elected a new IAC executive Board, which will serve for the next 3 years. The newly elected board members are Mrs. Mariam Lamizana (President), Dr. Amna A .R Hassan (Vice President - English), Mrs. Kadidia Sidibe (Vice President - French), Dr. Isatou Touray (Secretary General) and Mrs. Comfort Effiom (Treasurer).

A 12-point declaration was made by media representatives with a promise to network and to have a focal person to collect and collate stories in all the media for onward transmission to IAC.

A memorandum of agreement and cooperation was signed between the Inter-African Committee and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) an arm of the government of Egypt. Standing in for NCCM was H.E. Ambassador Moushira Khattab, the secretary general of NCCM.

The 7th IAC General Assembly/International Conference marks an epoch in the collaboration between IAC and the government of Egypt to accelerate the elimination of FGM from the Africa.

The next IAC General Assembly/ International Conference will be held in Cameroon in 2011.