

Consultative Meeting of Women Leaders with Brother Colonel Muammar Al-Gaddafi

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development organised a Consultative meeting of women with Brother Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi, held on Tuesday 18th March 2008 at 2:00 pm at Serena Conference centre. Women were invited to participate in the meeting and among them were Ministers, Members of political parties, Local Council Leaders, CSOs, Members of Parliament, University Students, Women Special Presidential Advisers, Judges, Armed Forces, Headmistresses and Special Presidential Advisers. WOUGNET was among the twenty women leaders selected by the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU) to participate in the consultative meeting.

Opening Remarks

The visitors were welcomed by Honourable Lukia Nakadama, who said that women had been invited to show solidarity to our brother leader Colonel Gaddafi, thank him for the work he has done in empowering women and the Youth in Africa. She expressed gratitude to the women mobilisers, who responded in a short time and were able to respond and mobilise women to come for this meeting.

Honourable Saida Bumba, welcomed Muammar Gaddafi to Uganda the Pearl of Africa and thanked him for closing the Afro/Arab Youth Conference that was held at Speke Resort hotel Munyonyo. She said the presence of Gaddafi in this meeting testified the support he has for women and also acknowledged Gaddafi having liberated the Libyan women. She expressed gratitude to Gaddafi for starting a program for empowering women and Youth in Africa. She said women of Uganda were anxiously waiting for the program. Indeed Gaddafi he is true a Father, Brother and a son of a woman.

Women's empowerment in Uganda started in 1940, but was greatly affected until 1986 when women were visibly empowered in the society politically, economically and socially. The government of Uganda under the able leadership of President Museveni put the law that guards women in the constitution, where there is equal opportunity and affirmative action. Affirmative action has increased women from armed forces from 18%-30%. Generally the good political will has increased women in political leadership and the increase of women in top management position. Under NRM Universal Primary Education (UPE) was started. 50% of those undertaking UPE are girls. Bonus points to girls were introduced and the number of women entering the university has increased to 45%. Government of Uganda has implemented programs that support women empowerment e.g. the national gender policy. PEAP also provides a frame for addressing poverty, where the majority poor are women. These examples show commitment to empowerment of women in Uganda and Africa as a whole.

Despite all these efforts women still live in problems such as lack of access to land, finances, low levels in education, limited access to modern facilities, that make-work easy for women. In Uganda women still use hands to make food, have limited access to safe water, limited access to financial services, poor infrastructure. In Uganda men still beat their wives, HIV AIDS has increased and the care is in the hands of women. The effects of war in Northern Uganda have led women to suffer widowhood, single hood and HIV. Negative attitudes about women are also a problem. High poverty rates, elderly women without assets, NRM government is aware of all these problems and is trying to address them. But due to limited finances the government cannot handle all the problems because of limited finances. Through strengthened brother hood, it is envisaged that Uganda will grow and prosper.

The Ugandan women call for a Women Resource Centre to be a training centre to assist in empowerment of women. During the Youth Conference Uganda was suggested to establish an Afro Arab Youth Council. The women of Uganda are also suggesting an Afro Arab Women Council and Uganda is pledging to be its secretariat. The women of Uganda are ready to work and get out of poverty and they all have ideas on how to get out of poverty and have written proposals but lack financial support.

In conclusion the Honourable Minister Saida Bumba requested Gaddafi to support an African Women Conference, which Uganda would host.

Address by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi

He started by saying that the relationship existing between Libya and Uganda is excellent. The Libyan government and the Uganda Government fought side by side to liberate Uganda. He said women are aware of the situations that they are going through. The change being experienced will be good for men and women in Africa. The transformation will be not only economic but to the whole life of African Citizen. The change will improve lives of African in terms of moral, social, economic to include the women, the children and the whole family.

He said that unfortunately many African leaders do not have a vision of transformation, as they are always thinking about politics and being elected in office. He said that the system of elections was imported from the western world. Africa is represented by kingdoms and not political parties. The current political crisis is about leadership; there is no time to think about children and women. Women should not look at politicians to solve their problems, but to focus on their own development.

In Africa, men derive a lot from women and do not even pay attention to them. In Africa women look after children who

are father less. Men have children with women and abandon them to have children with other women. This creates a big burden on the women.

He said he had submitted the issue of children with no fathers to African leaders to respond, so that families and marriages are respected. The men should be responsible for the children they give birth. Any who brings out a child should be responsible. The life we lead should be sacred and respected. This resolution may be challenged by resistance from men. So he called upon all women to support the resolution.

The services of African leaders are threatened by the constitution. He supported the President of Uganda to stay in power to accomplish his revolutionising program. He supported African Unity and said that, resources in Africa are available both human and financial. What is required is the free will to face the challenges. Africa is not willing to go back to a stage of slavery again. We should prove that Africa is a mother of all human beings.

He concluded by saying that he is counting on the power, activities and strength of youth and women in Africa. Long Live Africa.