

*Executive summary and background based upon plenary deliberations and position papers delivered during africanwoman2004 conference agenda sessions April 26 29 2004*

The Abuja Accord is the outcome of the tireless, unwavering, efforts of hundreds of dedicated African women who came to Abuja in response to a call to action on behalf of African Women, the world over. The Abuja Accord is an inspiring road map for the future direction of African Women.

The hue and cry of the conference was that "***The Women are Coming.***"...and the women came, they decided, and they acted with purpose, determination, and dedication. The women came in full force and with strength. The women came and deliberated for six exhilarating days, at the first ever African Woman's conference, convened by African women, for African women, in an African Context dealing deliberately with issues of major concern to African women.

During the passionate deliberations a myriad of concerns were highlighted that found expression within five major categories:

- ❖ Socio-Culture
- ❖ Culture
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Political

## ❖ Health

Within the framework of these five categories critical issues which included inheritance, widowhood, early marriage, poverty, human trafficking, discrimination in the workplace, lack of mentoring, illiteracy, lack of sister to sister care, respect, and comfort, early pregnancy, nutritional taboos, birth practices, HIV/AIDS, civil wars, internal conflicts, political marginalization and inadequate constitutional protection of women were some of the major sub-topics that emerged.

Moreover, two fundamental recognitions about women were made and seriously considered; those being that of Poverty and HIV/AIDS which both have an overwhelming prevalent woman's face. Within the framework of these two realizations many issues were raised. Furthermore, an issue that has been overlooked for many years was recognized as perhaps causing *the most damage*, yet ignored in many discussions as a major impediment to the full empowerment of women: that issue being on of *water* and its accessibility. Interestingly enough, it was found that the lack of good quality water was at the core of many of the social, educational, economic, health, and political ills that women were experiencing; in that water affected educational access for girl children, the spread of disease and the lack of sustainable economic growth.

It is/was the desire of the women present at this historic gathering to create a tangible realistic road map that would put forth solid attainable resolutions that can be reviewed and measured within the next 12 months at the follow-up gathering of African Women – and thus the birth of *the Abuja Accord*.

Two major developments of the past decade had relevant impact upon the deliberations of this august body of women. The first being, The United Nations' Fourth World Conference event, including delegates from nearly 2000 countries. What emerged from that conference focused on the removal of obstacles to women's equal participation in society. Noble concepts and goals were discussed; however, the most controversial sections of the platform concerned reproductive rights, particularly the right to have an abortion. In the final document, it was declared that *"the ability of women to control their own fertility forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights,"* and asserted the right of women and men to have access to all legal methods of fertility regulation. It must be noted that in the African context, this particular development is not one that is shared in a broad based constituency of African women.

We therefore recommend that while we embrace the spirit of the women who came together at Beijing, we must acknowledge that

this historic gathering of **AfricanWomen2004** will form the basis for a new direction and Platform of Action that will be most decidedly African and in the best interest of African women, children and the society as a whole. Without being presumptuous, we believe that ***The Abuja Accord***, which is a decidedly African platform that outlines an exemplary and ideal Code of Conduct, will hold great benefit for women of the world. Therefore it is recommended that we put forth ***The Abuja Accord*** at Beijing plus ten, to be held in the United States in 2005.

The order document that does in fact have a great deal to offer the African women, is **NEPAD**, a decidedly African document, which has been embraced fully and is one of the pillars of the African Union's way forward. **NEPAD** formed in Africa, by Africans, with an African context, African goals and the consideration of Africa's aspiration for sustainable development is a vital development document that can be successfully utilized by women in their forward development. We therefore have adopted a resolution that speaks to the utilization of the NEPAD\* document.

What I wish for myself, I also wish for my sister,

I wish you...

Comfort in difficult times,

Smiles when sadness intrudes,

Rainbows to your dreams,

Laughter to kiss your lips,  
Sunset to warm your heart,  
Gentle hugs when spirits sag,  
Friendships to brighten your days,  
Beauty for your eyes to see,  
Confidence for when you doubt,  
Faith to comfort your soul,  
Courage to know yourself,

Patience to accept the truth, and love to complete your life

***THE ABUJA ACCORD***

*Unanimously Ratified*

*At the*

**AFRICANWOMAN2004**

**International Conference on African Woman  
And Gender Development**

**ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**APRIL 24-30,2004**

# ***PREAMBLE***

Whereas we affirm that no life form, be it man, woman, fauna or flora can experience true life outside of the cycles of existence as designed by the Creator or in disregard for the benevolent and kind care of one another. The disregard of this fact – be it through ignorance or choice – leads to the degeneration and decline of life in quality and in longevity.

We forthrightly acknowledge that humanity (individuals, governments and religions) have not acted in accordance with this fact and man has presided over the degeneration of this world and the mistreatment of humanity, most notably women and children. This has occurred to a point in which injustice, hatred, racism, sexism, corruption, deception and death deprives millions of women and children of the dullness of life as intended.

Therefore it has become necessary that African women take their rightful place in the development of a just society to ensure the protection and continuation of life as the Creator intended as we too re-affirm our allegiance to the guidelines and principles of life that has been established from times eternal.

Therefore, we call upon our sisters to make a commitment to be just to one another and to consider the well being of all African woman and to make a promise to be a proactive member in the fight

tyranny, oppression, death, disease, injustice that affects all members of society. We make this promise to the reality that true life and living will be experienced by the entire society including the women, children and the men who will most certainly benefit by ensuring justice for all members of society.

***We hereby set forth the following resolutions: -***

Be it resolved that we women will make a timeless promise to be our Sister's keeper, and to ensure that we are earnestly involved with at least one woman that we can mentor during the year.

Be it resolved that we shall work tirelessly to ensure that all ***laws, directives and protocols*** for equitable treatment of women and children that **currently** exist in all the countries of Africa are implemented and enforced. Moreover, we African women will work diligently to ensure that countries are accountable for the lawful implementation of these laws for the betterment of society,

Be it resolved that from henceforth we shall petition our governments, municipalities, social service organisations, and NGOs to make the provision of portable water an absolute national priority.

Be it resolved that we shall work diligently to ensure that the principles and protocols of NEPAD are actualized in our respective

states and countries and that grass roots empowerment becomes a reality.

Be it resolved that we shall work conscientiously to ensure that the principles and aspirations of the newly formed African Union be upheld in the best interest of women, children and the society at large.

Be it resolved that we shall work diligently to inspire and encourage legislation that is able to sustain development of women, ensuring that all funding that is earmarked for women actually gets to the work necessary for women's sustainable development. We further resolved, to inspire, encourage and support women at the grass roots level to create monitoring groups that will work to ensure that the processes and financial aid are channelled to the intended work.

Be it resolved that we shall works assiduously to inspire and develop legislation and educational programmes that will ensure that the minimum legal age for marriage for the girl child is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys in this matter.

Be it resolved that we shall work vigorously at the local, state, national and continental levels to ensure that the trafficking in human cargo be eliminated forever. We further state that we shall work determinedly to ensure that neither girls and women nor men and

boys will be subjected to human trafficking, prostitution, slavery, or other forms of degradation to the human soul or spirit. We will utilize the Nigerian model as a way forward in combating this very real evil that is perpetuated against our societies.

Be it resolved that the insightful adage that when one educates man one educates an individual but when one educates a woman, one educates a nation. Therefore, be it resolved, that we shall work within our districts, local, state, federal, national, continental societies to ensure that girl children have at least an informal education that includes reading, writing, and skill acquisition. Moreover, every girl child should be entitled and encouraged to take advantage of free basic primary and secondary education plans. Furthermore, it is resolved that all women are to be entitled to skill development and basic educational support including but not limited to media literacy, political mentoring, basic skills in reading and writing.

Be it resolved that we shall work diligently to ensure that additional African women of integrity, imagination, discipline, accountability, justice and honour be elected into political offices that can make a difference for society as a whole and women in particular. Moreover, we will work with great effort to encourage the full and equitable participation of women in government, state houses, cabinets, legislatures, and appointed positions.

Be it resolved that we as African women shall urge governments and encourage NGOs to create centres of safety and sanctuaries for abused, battered, violated women and children.

Be it resolved that we shall work vigorously to ensure that every woman has the fundamental human right to receive basic primary and reproductive health care services, free of charge to her or her family.

Be it resolved that we shall ensure that extensive educational processes continue to be developed and maintained concerning the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has a decidedly African Woman's face upon it.

Be it resolved that we, African Women, reserve the right to lawful protest, and to reject those policies and practices that are detrimental to the well being of the woman, her children and her family.

Be it resolved that we shall work tirelessly and vigorously to ensure that women are represented and integrated at all participatory levels in the conflict resolution process throughout the continent.

Be it resolved that we shall develop a bilateral continental resource bank of women and men who have skills and talents that can be fully

utilized in the development of the Continent and who otherwise are being underutilized.

***And finally,***

Be it resolved that we shall meet each year to review the state of the African woman at the time, to measure our progress, to determine the way forward, to inspire each of us to greater heights. Be it further resolved that The Logo and Image of African Woman2004 is the model for how we shall proceed for planning of future gatherings.