

AFRO-ARAB EXPERT CONSULTATION ON LEGAL TOOLS  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

## Solemn Appeal against Female Genital Mutilation

We have decided to speak and to act, aware that silence is the best ally of a terrible practice that still affects millions of women.

***"There are practices that our ancestors themselves, if they came back to life, would find obsolete and outdated,"***  
**said the great African sage Amadou Hampaté Bâ.**

There are now between 120 and 130 million women around the world who have suffered due to female genital mutilation (FGM). Every year, two million girls and young women are subjected to this practice that still survives despite the measures taken in many of the countries involved to try to eliminate it. While sub-Saharan Africa, as well as some parts of the Arab peninsula, i.e., Yemen and Oman and certain parts of the Far East, remain the homelands of the practice, these are not the only places affected. As a result of emigration from these areas towards industrialised countries, Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are also now involved.

Concerned by the persistence and geographical magnitude of female genital mutilation,

we the undersigned, the signatories of this Appeal, have decided to speak and to act, aware that silence is the best ally of a terrible practice which still affects millions of women.

While, in the last twenty years, people have begun to talk and it is easier to evaluate the damage caused by FGM;

While, many leading politicians and members of civil society - including many of the signatories of this appeal - have fought and continue to fight against it courageously;

While, many States have decided to attempt to eliminate it and have taken legislative, administrative and other measures to this end, in particular -in Africa- by creating a joint coordination structure;

However, the persistence of FGM, including infibulation - its most violent form - demonstrates the limits of the measures taken so far and the need for us to become more personally involved in the struggle for its elimination.

While we note that FGM may have been forced on women as an attempt to reinforce and to codify the traditional roles of the sexes, the practice of the removal of

AFRO-ARAB EXPERT CONSULTATION ON LEGAL TOOLS  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

all or part of the external female genital organs is not prescribed by any religion, and is now in total contradiction with the universally accepted principles of respect for the physical and moral integrity of the individual, and of equality in dignity and in rights of the sexes, and constitutes an unacceptable abuse against women. In addition to the psychological harm it produces, it also leads to countless medical complications and contributes to the persistence of high rates of female mortality in the countries where it is still widely practiced.

Today, most African and Asian countries affected by this custom have signed and ratified the principal international conventions that condemn it, in particular the international Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women of 1979 and the international Convention on the rights of the child of 1989. Most of them have also supported United Nations resolutions that call for its elimination, in particular the plan of action of the Cairo Conference on population and development of 1994, and that of the Beijing Conference on women of 1995.

— Aware that the international legal instruments to fight against female genital mutilation already exist;

— Convinced that the States involved must do more to implement them and to persuade the populations involved in the practice that they will lose none of their identity by giving it up,

— Convinced that instead they will gain in dignity by becoming aware that traditions and cultures that are unable to evolve are more at risk of becoming extinct.

We, the women and men, signatories of this Appeal, born in countries where female genital mutilation has been traditionally practiced or in countries where it has been imported in recent times, or simply eager to fight against a custom that violates the rights and the dignity of millions of women around the world, pledge to use all our influence and to do everything in our ability to contribute to its eradication.

For this reason, we solemnly call upon:

the Heads of State, the Governments and the Parliamentarians of the countries in which Female Genital Mutilation are traditionally practiced:

to ensure the respect of the human rights of women and girls, in particular the right not to be subjected to discrimination, and the right to health, to physical integrity and to life;

to legislate — in countries which don't yet have specific legislation — to consider Female Genital Mutilation as a violation of fundamental rights of the human person and to provide for sanctions for those who practice it;

to promote information campaigns to bring about a lasting change in the behaviours of the populations that practice Female Genital Mutilation, addressed to all social classes and taking into consideration all the aspects of the practice: human

AFRO-ARAB EXPERT CONSULTATION ON LEGAL TOOLS  
FOR THE PREVENTION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

rights, health, social and gender relations, involving national and local institutions, non-governmental organisations, traditional and religious leaders and the media;  
to include programmes for the prevention of the practice in reproductive health policies and to guarantee universal access to the health services;  
to set aside sufficient funds for these initiatives.

the governments and the Parliamentarians of the immigration countries:  
harmonise the existing legislative framework on Female Genital Mutilation and to ensure that all legislative measures are accompanied by information campaigns to ensure that the law is understood, accepted, applied and respected;  
to consider carefully the application of penalties against Female Genital Mutilation in order to ensure their effectiveness;  
to consider the possibility of granting residence permits and protection to the victims of this practice and to recognise the right of asylum for women and girls who risk genital mutilation.

International organisations and the governments of the countries concerned, as well as donor countries:

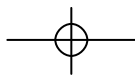
to support information campaigns, education programmes and reproductive health initiatives that aim to eradicate female genital mutilation;  
to support the work of non-governmental organisations, associations, and women's or youth groups, as well as networks of such bodies;  
to contribute to effect the reforms necessary to promote equality between the sexes.

local, national and international non-governmental organisations:  
to reinforce collaboration and co-ordination of interventions, as well as to capitalize upon the results obtained, in order to increase the effectiveness of their actions and to achieve as soon as possible the goal of the complete eradication of Female Genital Mutilation;  
to intensify collaboration between organisations in the countries of origin and immigration countries of women who have suffered Female Genital Mutilation in order to prevent the practice among migrant populations.

Finally, we call upon all women and men of good-will all over the world to do everything they can to help to abolish the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, with the aim of ensuring that it disappears completely within fifteen years, so that, in the countries concerned, a new generation of women, equal to everyone else in rights and in dignity, will be born.



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# Agenda Program

SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 2003

9:00 – 10.00

*Coffee and Registration of participants*

10:00 – 11:15

## **OPENING SESSION**

Chair Keynote Speaker: H.E. Ms. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady, Egypt  
Rapporteur : Amb.Moushira Khattab, Secretary General, NCCM, Egypt

Sheikh Mohammed Sayed Tantawy, Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar  
H.H. Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of Alexandria and See of st. Mark (to be confirmed)  
Mariam Lamizana, Minister of Social Action and National Solidarity, Burkina Faso  
Jaap Doek, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Emma Bonino, Member of the European Parliament, Italy

11:15 - 13.00

## **PROGRAMS FOR THE PREVENTION OF FGM**

Moushira Khattab, Secretary General, NCCM, Egypt  
The activities of the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood in the field of FGM

Daniela Colombo, President, AIDOS, Italy  
The "Stop FGM" Campaign

Aziza Hussein, President, Egyptian Society for the Prevention of Harmful Practices -  
ESPHP, Egypt  
The Egyptian Society for the Prevention of Harmful Practices: twenty years of experience

Amna Abdel Rahman, Vice President, Inter-African Committee against traditional  
practices - IAC, Ethiopia  
The "Zero Tolerance to FGM" IAC program

Hamdi El Sayed, Chair of Medical Syndicate, Egypt  
Medical Ethics Perspectives

13.00 - 15.00

*LUNCH*

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MAME BASSINE NIANG, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER,  
SENEGAL**

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FOR THE PREVENTION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

15.00 - 18.00

**BACKGROUND FOR WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION**

Chairs: Daniela Colombo, President, AIDOS, Italy; Gianfranco Dell'Alba, Secretary General, NPWJ, Italy

Laura Katzive, CRR, United States  
Using Legislation to Promote Women's Rights: considerations in drafting and implementing legislation to prevent FGM

Nahid Toubia, President, RAINBO, United Kingdom  
Legislation as a tool for behaviour change

**COUNTRY CASE STUDIES**

Kenya: Ken Wafula, Lawyer  
Mali: Sidibé Kadidia Maïga Aoudou, President, AMSOPT  
Burkina Faso: Gisèle Kambou, Secretary General, Voix de Femmes  
Fareda Banda, University of London School of Oriental and African Studies  
FGM and the law in Europe  
Kady Koita: President, European women network Fgm and civil society activities in Europe  
Antonio Vigilante: Undp resident coordinator, Egypt

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Moderator: Katherine Hall Martinez, Director of International Program, CRR, United States

**SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2003**

9.00 - 9.30

*Coffee*

9.30 - 13.00

**WORKING GROUPS**

**WORKING GROUP I**

Desirability and objectives of adopting legislation as a tool for social change

**WORKING GROUP II**

Technical elements of law on FGM

13.00 - 15.00

**LUNCH**

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**KEYNOTE SPEAKER : HALIMA WARZAZI, UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR  
ON TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**

15.00 - 18.00

**RESUMED WORKING GROUPS**

MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2003

9.00 - 10.15

**PRESENTATION OF THE WORKING GROUPS REPORT AND ADOPTION OF A STRATEGY  
DOCUMENT ON FGM LEGISLATION**

10.15 - 10.30

*Coffee break*

10.30 - 13.00

**CLOSING SESSION**

10.30 - 11.00

**PRESS CONFERENCE : PRESENTATION OF THE EXPERT CONSULTATION RESULTS**

Moushira Khattab, Secretary General, NCCM, Egypt  
Emma Bonino, Member of the European Parliament, Italy  
Daniela Colombo, President, AIDOS, Italy  
Mona El-Tobgui, ESPHP, Egypt

11.00 - 12.30

**PROJECTS PRESENTATIONS**

Chiku Lweno, TAMWA  
Media Campaign against FGM in Tanzania  
Laetitia Palleva, NPWJ and Cristiana Scoppa, AIDOS  
The Stop FGM International Appeal and Web Portal  
Mona El-Tobgui, ESPHP  
Media Campaign against FGM in Egypt  
Sophie Bessis, writer  
FGM Dictionary

12.30

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT CONSULTATION**



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