THE BANFGM COALITION

WORLDWIDE BAN OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION:
FROM A DECISION OF THE AFRICAN UNION TO A
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

Ban FGM Worldwide

General Assembly of the United Nations, the 67th Session
A WORLDWIDE BAN ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Why a United Nations General Assembly Resolution?

A Resolution, in addition to being a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation and recognizing this practice as a violation of human rights, specifically the right to physical integrity, would also provide strong and clear support for all activists working to bring an end to the practice. Specifically, a United Nations General Assembly Resolution will:

• reinforce the legitimacy of laws already adopted;

• reinforce the importance of previous steps by United Nations, including the political weight of the Resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW);

• reinforce the regional and international conventions that recognize FGM as a violation of human rights, for instance Article 5 of the Protocol to the Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa;

• give new impetus to efforts to improve national laws banning FGM where they exist, or to adopt one, where they do not;

• provide States with recommendations on elements for the adoption of effective national legislation;

• reinforce the efforts of anti-FGM activists at the national and regional level and provide legitimacy to those working towards the enactment of legislation in states where as of yet there is none;

• encourage the allocation of sufficient resources to the effective implementation of legislation and action plans aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation.
In July 2011, at the African Union Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African Heads of State adopted a Decision in support of a Resolution banning female genital mutilation to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Decision was evidence of the commitment to the issue on the part of States who have been at the forefront of fight against FGM throughout Africa.

This historic moment provided a significant and concrete impetus to the International Campaign for a United Nations General Assembly Resolution to ban FGM Worldwide, which has been growing since a High-Level Conference in Ouagadougou in December 2009 held under the patronage of the First Lady of Burkina Faso, H.E. Mme Chantal Compaoré. Since that time, and with renewed dedication at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Dakar in April 2010, an ever-widening group of activists has focused increasingly on bringing the struggle against female genital mutilation to the United Nations General Assembly, gathering the support of human rights activists, women’s organizations, parliamentarians and government representatives from throughout Africa and Europe. The release in January of this year of the United Nations Secretary General’s Report “Ending Female Genital Mutilation” was another significant step, providing an overview of issues the as well as bringing attention to the AU Decision and emphasizing the timeliness of the process now underway at the UN.

In response to the African Union Decision taken in Malabo, the African Group at the UN took action to implement the will of the Heads of State by introducing a CSW Decision at the Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 2012, recommending that the issue of FGM, until now discussed only within the context of the CSW, be formally considered by the General Assembly under the agenda item “Advancement of Women”. In support of the African Group’s effort, the Ban FGM Coalition launched, in May 2012, during an event held under the auspices of the Presidency of the Belgian Senate, an international appeal to the United Nations for a Resolution that explicitly bans female genital mutilation worldwide, and calling on all States to adopt and implement legislation to ban female genital mutilation and to take all necessary legislative, political and operational measures aimed at ending the practice. Within a few months, the appeal gathered the support from prominent political personalities around the world, among whom Laurent Fabius, French Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, EU’s High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Clemence Traore Some, Minister of Social Affairs and National Solidarity (Burkina Faso), Elio Di Rupo, Prime Minister, Belgium, Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission and EU Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Patricia Espinosa, Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Mexico), Sihem Badi, Minister of Women and Family Affairs, Tunisia.

In July 2012, the ECOSOC adopted the CSW recommendation and requested that the issue of female genital mutilation be added to the agenda of the 67th General Assembly. On 26 November 2012, the Social, Humanitarian Cultural Affairs Committee (commonly referred to as the Third Committee) of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the draft resolution “Intensifying Global Efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation” submitted by the African Group at the UN in October. This landmark step paved the way to its adoption by the UNGA on 20 December 2012, at its 67th Ordinary Session.

The adoption of the UNGA Resolution banning FGM worldwide represents a paradigm shift of great significance, providing the highest-level expression of political will to address this human rights violation as a global issue affecting the daily lives of women and girls worldwide. Notably, the resolution urges States to 'condemn all harmful practices that affect women and girls, in particular female genital mutilations, and to take all necessary measures, including enacting and enforcing legislation to prohibit female genital mutilations and to protect women and girls from this forms of violence, and to end impunity'.

This Resolution is an essential turning point, yet the fight is far from over. This expression of political will must be followed by concrete actions by all governments to ensure that effective national laws banning FGM are enacted and enforced and to move the world ever closer to the day that this egregious human rights violation will be once and for all eliminated.
On 20 December 2012 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopts the resolution “Intensifying Global Efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation”. The text is an essential contribution by the international community to address this human rights violation as a global issue affecting the daily lives of women and girls worldwide. Notably, the resolution urges States to 'condemn all harmful practices that affect women and girls, in particular female genital mutilations, and to take all necessary measures, including enacting and enforcing legislation to prohibit female genital mutilations and to protect women and girls from this form of violence, and to end impunity'.

In collaboration with the African Union Commission, the Permanent Missions of Burkina Faso and Benin co-organised the High Level Event “Intensifying Global Efforts for Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation” which took place on 24 September 2012, in New York, on the eve of the opening of the General Debate of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The event, attended by over 150 participants, among whom First Ladies, Ministers, Ambassadors and the representatives of UN Agencies and civil society, underscored the importance given to combating FGM by an ever-widening group of States. In addition to Mrs. Chantal Compaore, First Lady of Burkina Faso and Mrs. Chantal de Souza
Yayi, First Lady of Benin, who co-preserved the event, three other First Ladies also took the floor: Mrs. Hadidja Aboubacar, First Lady of Comores, Mrs. Elsie Christofias, First Lady of Cyprus and Mrs. Antoinette Sassou N’Guesso, First Lady of Congo, all of whom stressed the pivotal role of the United Nations General Assembly in showing political will to bring the battle against FGM to the highest of levels and intensify the global effort for its elimination. Other speakers included Emma Bonino, vice-president of the Italian Senate and founder of No Peace Without Justice, Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF; Mr Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, Ms. Saraswathi Menon, Director of Policy Division, UNWomen, and the Italian Under-secretaries of State Marta Dassu and Staffan De Mistura as well as the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations.

12 JULY 2012, NEW YORK
THE UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC) UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTS THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN’S DRAFT DECISION

In July 2012, The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) unanimously adopted the Commission on the Status of Women’s Draft Decision recommending that the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) should be taken into the consideration by the United Nations General Assembly at its forthcoming 67th Session as part of the agenda item “Advancement of women”. Such a CSW Decision and its adoption by the ECOSOC were the result of the leadership and the determination of the African Group at the UN to bring worldwide attention to the issue of FGM, and followed the Campaign for a Worldwide Ban on FGM spearheaded by an ever-expanding Coalition which is composed of No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC), Euronet-FGM, and the NGOs La Palabra, Manifesto 99 and Equality Now. The adoption by the ECOSOC of the CSW’s draft decision, was a further major step in the international campaign to foster global leadership in the fight against female genital mutilation as a wide-scale and blatant violation of the fundamental human rights of women and girls.
14 JUNE 2012, STRASBOURG
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A WORLDWIDE BAN ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION BY THE UN

On 14 June 2012, the European Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution on female genital mutilation, reaffirming its strong condemnation of FGM as a violation of the human rights of women and girls. The resolution reinforced the Lambsdorff Report and provided the recommendation to the EU Council and the Commission to actively support the African-led initiative to ban FGM worldwide through a UNGA Resolution and with taking this step the European Parliament gave its support to the African Union decision, which calls upon the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to adopt a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation. The support to the International Appeal launched by the Ban FGM Coalition, calling upon the United Nations to take responsibility and give heed to the voices of the innumerable human rights groups, women’s associations and individual advocates that fight a daily battle to challenge FGM and work towards the adoption and implementation of comprehensive legislation that prohibits this harmful practice was expressed by the prominent political personalities.

3 MAY 2012, BRUSSELS
THE BELGIAN SENATE HOSTS THE LAUNCH OF AN APPEAL CALLING FOR A RESOLUTION BY THE UNGA IN 2012

In May 2012, an appeal to the United Nations for a Resolution that explicitly bans female genital mutilation worldwide and calls on all States to take all necessary legislative, political and operational measures aimed at ending the practice was launched by the International NGO Coalition for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation. Launch aimed to involve Belgian and European political actors in support of the African initiative for a Resolution and it was another step in the series of events organized by the Ban FGM Coalition in African capitals and at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event was hosted by the Senate of Belgium and included such prominent speakers as H.E. Mrs Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso, Goodwill Ambassador of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices and Coordinator of the International Ban FGM Campaign, Isabelle Durant, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Emma Bonino, Vice-President of the Italian Senate, Gisèle Mandaila, Member of the Brussels Regional Parliament, Ivan Hermans, Senior Policy and External Relations Advisor UNFPA, Khady Koïta, President of La Palabre and other important personalities who have been involved in efforts both in Belgium and internationally to bring an end to FGM.
27 February 2012, New York
At the 56th Commission on the Status of Women High Level Meeting to BanFGM Worldwide

The BanFGM Coalition organizes a High Level Parallel Event “The worldwide ban on female genital mutilation: From the Decision of the African Union to a United Nations General Assembly Resolution”.

The meeting is held at Ministerial level and is co-chaired by Mariam Lamizana for CIAF and by Emma Bonino for NPWJ, and is opened by Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women and closed by H.E. Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso, Coordinator of the International Campaign to BanFGM Worldwide.

6 February 2012, African Capitals International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

The Zero Tolerance Day was dedicated to the Campaign “From the African Union to the United Nations: In support of a UN General Assembly Resolution banning FGM worldwide” in numerous countries, including Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda.

9 January 2012, Djibouti
The IGAD Inter-Parliamentary Union, Djibouti

The IGAD Parliamentary Union adopted a formal decision “Calling for the prompt implementation of the Malabo Decision of the African Union by the African Group of States at the United Nations, so that the worldwide ban on can be realized as soon as possible”. The decision came after months of preparatory work by the BanFGM Coalition, including a formal hearing on 21 November 2011 in Addis-Ababa.

20 December 2011, Dakar
BanFGM Event

La Palabre and the Network of Parliamentarians for Population and Development organized a meeting in Dakar, Senegal on 20 December 2011, to showcase the developments of the BanFGM Campaign since the Dakar Conference of May 2010, and to encourage the Senegalese authorities to take a leading role in the process to adopt the Resolution at the 66th UNGA.
**SEPTEMBER/NOVEMBER 2011, ACCRA & ABDIJAN STOCKTAKE CONFERENCE**

The Coalition to BanFGM Worldwide organized a two-part “Stocktaking Conference”, in September in Accra, Ghana, and in November in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. The Accra session was organized in partnership with the Ghanaian Association for Women Welfare and brought together the main activists in the Coalition for an intense brainstorming session prior to the opening of the 66th General Assembly. The Abidjan session was organized in collaboration with the Ivorian Fondation Djigui – La Grande Esperance, and provided an opportunity to review progress and challenges, particularly following the months of direct advocacy since the opening of the 66th session of the UN General Assembly.

The two-part Conference was successful in establishing priorities and identifying the next steps and enhance coordination to ensure maximum impact both in the respective capitals, reinforce the strategic connections among actors (decision-makers, NGOs, parliamentarians), with the objective of transferring the strong political will expressed in Africa towards moving forward on the adoption on an UNGA resolution in New York.

**15 SEPTEMBER 2011, NEW YORK NGO BRIEFING AT FORMAL AFRICAN GROUP AMBASSADORS’ MEETING**

Following the adoption of the AU Decision in Malabo, the African Group at United Nations headquarters in NY invited members of the BanFGM Coalition to brief the African Group Ambassadors on female genital mutilation and the need for a worldwide ban on FGM through a UNGA Resolution.

**JUNE / JULY 2011, MALABO 17TH AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT DECISION CALLING FOR A UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION TO BAN FGM WORLDWIDE**

The African Union Summit marked a decisive moment in the Campaign, notably through the adoption of the AU Decision calling for a UN General Assembly Resolution to ban female genital mutilation worldwide. The BanFGM Coalition took part in the AU Summit in order to capitalise on the advocacy work done by its members in their respective capitals.

**APRIL/MAY 2011, CONAKRY BANFGM COALITION RECEIVED BY FOREIGN MINISTER AND FIRST LADY**

On the occasion of the Sub-regional Workshop for religious leaders organized by the Inter-African Committee, the Coalition to BanFGM Worldwide travelled to Conakry, Guinea to meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the First Lady H.E. Mrs Condé, who pledged their support of a formal Decision by the African Union for a UNGA FGM ban.
**APRIL 2011, DAKAR**  
**BANFGM CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER, MINISTER FOR GENDER AND MPs**

The BanFGM Coalition met with the Minister of Gender and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Senegal and numerous Members of Parliament who pledged their support of a formal Decision by the African Union for a UN General Assembly FGM ban.

**MARCH 2011, OUAGADOUGOU**  
**BANFGM CAMPAIGN AT THE IPU AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HEARING**

The BanFGM Worldwide Coalition took part in a Inter-Parliamentary Union and Burkinabé National Assembly event on “Taking legislative action to end violence against women and girls”. The meeting, comprising Members of Parliament from across Central and West Africa was an occasion to reinforce political advocacy for a worldwide ban on FGM by parliaments. The BanFGM Campaign also received by H.E. Mrs Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso, and Campaign Coordinator, who renewed her pledge for the Campaign for African Union Decision and for a worldwide ban on FGM by the UNGA.

**28 FEBRUARY 2011, NEW YORK**  
**55TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

The Coalition to Ban FGM Worldwide organized a breakfast meeting on 28 February 2011, under the patronage of the Burkina Faso mission in New York and H.E. Mrs Chantal Compaoré, First Lady of Burkina Faso. This meeting and discussion brought together European and African activists and representatives of civil society organizations together with Parliamentarians and representatives of governments to discuss strategies and the next steps to strengthen the BanFGM Campaign. The need to engage the African Union and the Malabo Strategy was the main outcome of the meeting.

**6 FEBRUARY 2011, AFRICAN CAPITALS AND ROME**  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

On 6 February 2011, the multimedia Campaign “Decidi tu che segno lasciare” (“Choose what mark to leave”) was launched by No Peace Without Justice in Rome, Italy and –through a targeted internet campaign– by the BanFGM Coalition members across Africa and around the world, through the website www.banfgm.org with the participation of activists, members of parliament, government representatives.
General Assembly of the United Nations

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