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West African collaboration for gender equality enhanced by new UN initiative



Women marching against sexual violence in the DRC (file photo)

8 February 2010 – Gender equality, respect for women’s rights and the fight against sexual violence in West Africa received a new weapon in its arsenal today with the launch of a United Nations initiative to enhance cooperation among all stakeholders in the region.

“It is now crucial for the international community, governments and civil society to combine their efforts to address gender issues in the sub-region,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative for West Africa Said Djinnit said at the launch in Dakar, Senegal, of the Directory of Human Rights and Gender Organizations in West Africa.

The event was organized in collaboration with the UN Development Fund for Women (**UNIFEM**). The directory intends to map out initiatives and to facilitate information sharing in order to encourage networking on the issue.

“In this respect, the United Nations Office for West Africa (**UNOWA**) and UNIFEM continue to facilitate synergy-driven initiatives such as this directory, and the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security that was established in April 2009,” Mr. Djinnit said.

The launch took place within the framework of Mr. Ban’s “**Unite** to end violence against women,” that was officially launched for the African continent during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa.

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