



African women, Pan-Africanism and African renaissance



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Table of Contents

4 Foreword

6 Introduction

9 Part I. Women in the sphere of Pan-Africanism

10 Introduction **12** Back to history **19** Resistance by women before the advent of Pan-Africanism **30** The influence of Pan-Africanism on African resistance **42** The fight for independence **60** After independence: societal claims and armed struggle **73** Challenges for the new generation of African women

81 Part II. Fifty years of fighting for equality (1962-2012)

82 The Pan-African Women's Organization, symbol of women's fight for equality **83** "The role of African women: yesterday, today and tomorrow"

101 Appendices

102 Annex 1 : Programme: 50th Anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization **105** Annex 2 : Speech by Ms Irina Bokova **109** Annex 3 : Address by Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma **116** Annex 4 : Outcome Document of 50th anniversary of PAWO Celebration **122** Annex 5 : The founding mothers of the Pan-African Women's Organization

125 For further information

130 List of illustrations



Foreword

Over the last 50 years and more, considerable progress has been achieved for women in Africa, thanks in no small part to the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO). Nevertheless, the results are mixed and there is still much to be done to secure full recognition of women's rights, health issues and political and social participation. Women's poverty is a persisting fact of life. More must be done to help people to understand the hope and the potential that women hold for Africa's future in terms of growth, inclusion and social justice.

UNESCO works unrelentingly to promote education, science and culture – resources that are essential to the full development of the individual and are levers for sustainable development. PAWO's work is wholly consistent with our Organization's two overarching priorities: Africa and gender equality. These two priorities are inseparable. The continent is undergoing a renaissance, with women at the forefront of that process. They are playing a pioneering role in the pan-African movement, by harnessing their creativity and dedication to serve peace, justice and the well-being of their families, their communities and their country. Africa has the highest rate of female entrepreneurship in the world, and it is no coincidence that most of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world today are in Africa. It is in Africa that gender parity in politics is spreading fastest, and the highest percentage of the world's women parliamentarians is in Senegal, Rwanda and elsewhere in Africa. All of these women have called for resources to enable them to act, and we must support them, for everyone's sake.

Such action begins with education, and quality education for girls and women must be the main priority of any sustainable development strategy. UNESCO is working to achieve that goal both politically, in order to ensure that quality education is central to the global development agenda, and locally, in partnership with schools and teachers, to promote literacy, technical and vocational education, teacher training and the use of new technologies. Africa is a priority for the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education that

UNESCO launched in 2011. Africa needs more women scientists, teachers and artists, and UNESCO is committed to supporting them, firmly convinced that they hold the continent's future in their hands.

Knowledge of history is another key lever for dignity and identity and for adopting a future-oriented stance. UNESCO has responded by launching an interactive e-learning tool dedicated entirely to women in African history in order to raise awareness of the historical women figures who have forged the history of the continent and its Diaspora. Furthermore, UNESCO is promoting the pedagogical use of its *General History of Africa*, which should be widely used in schools and in textbooks.

The 2012 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), held at UNESCO Headquarters and organized jointly by UNESCO and the African Union Commission, reflects the depth of the values that unite us. This book affords a perfect opportunity for us to strengthen and reaffirm our shared commitment to women and to Africa.

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO

Introduction

This document is a follow-up to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in November 2012, at the initiative of the Permanent Delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania, the country where PAWO was founded, and the Permanent Delegation of Republic of South Africa, the country which has hosted the Organization since 2008.

Since it was created in 1962, one year before the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), PAWO has played a particularly important part in the history of the continent, its actions contributed to the advancement of women's' rights and to recognition of the role of women in African society.

In recognition of the role that PAWO has played and continues to play in championing gender equality and in reconstructing and developing the continent, South Africa and Tanzania considered it appropriate to pay tribute to its achievements by joining in celebrating the 50th anniversary of its establishment. This anniversary was the opportunity for constructive discussions on the effective participation of African women in socio-economic and cultural development and Africa and its future.

Prompted by the success of the celebration and the recommendations of the participants, UNESCO therefore undertook to publish a work highlighting the struggle of African women to liberate the continent from the yoke of colonialism and to assert the values of Pan-Africanism. The endeavours of these women, many in number but little known, bears testimony to women's commitment to assume their role and responsibilities in the future of the continent.

Designed under the general stewardship of the Africa Department of UNESCO, Part I comprises a study of the development of Pan-Africanism through the lives of iconic African women who made their mark on their era through their struggles and movements that were influenced politically, socially and culturally by Pan-Africanism.

Part II contains the discussions on “The Role of African Women: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”, held to mark the 50th anniversary celebrations, and tells of African women’s work to promote peace, justice and well-being for their families, their communities and their nation in the past five decades.

As a follow-up to the celebrations of PAWO’s 50th anniversary and in response to calls to enhance the visibility of the role played by African women, this book will inform as many people as possible, in particular, youth, about African women’s role and achievements in the liberation and development of the continent. It also proposes, through a pedagogical approach, to provide a number of markers on the components and influence of Pan-Africanism and its enrichment through African women’s contribution to freedom – their own and that of all Africans.

Edouard Firmin Matoko
Director
Africa Department





Part I

Women in the sphere of Pan-Africanism¹

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- 1 This text was provided with the contribution of Sylvia Serbin, historian and journalist, author of the book *Reines d'Afrique et héroïnes de la diaspora noire* (2004, ed. Sepia).



Introduction

Many African women from various backgrounds have engaged in acts of resistance and in liberation struggles, yet their names appear far too infrequently in history books. Others have made a major contribution to the development of the continent through their work as agricultural producers and entrepreneurs, but sufficient attention is not paid to this aspect. All too often these women are disregarded by researchers and, with some rare exceptions, are excluded from historiography on Africa. Their efforts and sacrifices have not been adequately transmitted to posterity and they risk being consigned to oblivion altogether.

Yet the history of our continent is permeated by individual and collective women's struggles, illustrative of a long tradition of women's involvement in their society battles that still resound in some oral traditions. Although women's commitment to such action has often been ignored and only men have been recorded as seeing collective action, African women know what struggle entails. It defies belief that only men held the historical front stage in traditional Africa, while their wives, mothers and daughters were relegated to domestic chores and merely took to their heels whenever danger loomed.

From the north to the south of the continent, in the various cultural areas of pre-colonial Africa and even in non-matriarchal societies, outstanding women rose to prominence as leaders of their kingdoms, warriors, resistance fighters or opinion-shapers. Others made empire-builders of their sons.

They took initiatives on behalf of their community and nobody contested their influence on the grounds of gender because it was not the concept of gender that mattered at that time but rather their contributory response as citizens within their community, particularly in crisis situations.

Their role in Africa's history has never been really described. Textbooks generally have not a word to say about their valiant deeds, even though they have been written in order to teach the younger generation about those who have shaped our past. If these great persons are again identified, the international media would no longer generally project a self-effacing image of African women who have made a rather long-standing contribution to their history.

If the spotlight is turned sufficiently on these women – our ancestors, our grandmothers and our mothers – they could become role models, not only for people of African descent, but also for all young people worldwide.

This document will be educational in approach, providing references on the features and the spread of Pan-Africanism. Although it was promoted exclusively by men, by whom it was championed, Pan-Africanism gave rise in Africa to many women's movements that joined forces to struggle and stake claims for freedom and for greater recognition of women's contribution to national governance. It must be borne in mind, however, that women were active in resistance movements before Pan-Africanism came into being. African women's rise to prominence will be illustrated by sketching some portraits of figures who epitomize the struggle for their people's freedom and dignity, with emphasis on those in the more distant past, since they are less well known to the contemporary public.

Back to history

The notion of Pan-Africanism

The word “Pan-Africanism” has been used in so many different speeches and contexts that it may seem complicated to the uninitiated. As a school of thought promoted by black American and West Indian awareness-raisers in the second half of the nineteenth century, had a considerable impact by promoting unity and solidarity between continental Africans and people of the black Diaspora, scattered throughout the world by the slave trade and slavery. Their common goal was to assert black people’s right to enjoy freedom in the same way as every other human being.

Those were new words, at a time when the African continent was in the grip of European conquest, but they were espoused by the first black intellectuals to study in the United States of America and in Great Britain. They had heard of the unifying doctrines that had been emerging since the end of the nineteenth century: pan-Americanism, aimed at establishing mutual interest and support among the States of the Americas – from the United States of America to South America and Haiti – and so shake off the influence of the old European colonial powers; pan-Germanism, an intellectual and political movement that sought to kindle a sense of patriotism among the peoples of Germanic origin and culture throughout Europe in order to create a Greater Germany; and pan-Arabism, which called on Arab-Muslim nations to unite around a shared identity based on their common religious and cultural heritage and so take a stand against the various strands of Western imperialism.

The task of raising black people’s awareness worldwide of their plight as victims of the same tyranny required large-scale mobilization against the oppression that they faced in Africa and the Americas. Black people had been marked by their common historical experience of slavery, colonization and racism. United, they could militate for Africa to be developed on the basis of the continent’s own strengths, namely its local people, and to decline to

emulate European models in order to “show that black people could govern themselves and rise into the upper echelons of civilization”, to quote Antenor Firmin (1850-1910), a Haitian lawyer, journalist, anthropologist and diplomat, and author of *De l'égalité des races humaines* [On the Equality of Human Races], published in Paris in 1885.

The idea of Pan-Africanism was thus driven initially by black Americans and West Indians seeking to establish contact with Africa after slavery in their respective countries had been abolished between 1833 and 1838 in the British West Indies, in 1848 in the French West Indies, in 1865 in the United States of America and in 1885 in Brazil. Pan-Africanism came into being outside Africa primarily as outward resistance to racial segregation in post-slavery societies that marginalized black people economically and socially and in terms of civil rights, before developing into a refutation of the racist theories of black inferiority propounded worldwide by European writers. It was merely an isolated cry of revolt at first, but it spread and gathered momentum in the first half of the twentieth century to become a powerful unifying movement, heralding a black Renaissance that aimed to embody black people's desire for intellectual, cultural and political affirmation. It was not until after the Second World War that Pan-Africanism actually spread to Africa, where it was taken up in the struggle against colonialism, before becoming the political vision of States that acceded to independence in the 1960s.

The cultural goal of Pan-Africanism – as evinced in literature, research and personal accounts published mainly in Great Britain and the United States of America in the late nineteenth century – was to break with colonialist discourse that claimed that African people had neither history nor civilization. Black authors were the first to discuss, disseminate and popularize themes that highlighted the history of Africa as the cradle of humanity. Their enquiry

focused on pre-colonial African kingdoms and on African civilizations. The image of Ethiopia as the only African land that had never been colonized was popularized in the black Diaspora and it was projected as a symbol of pride. Works published on the ravages wrought the slave trade highlighted resistance to slavery and colonization – both topics that have generally been ignored in traditional historiography. Lastly, intellectuals worked to refute the pseudoscientific ideology that asserted the biological superiority of whites over the supposedly inferior blacks, who were deemed to be the missing link between human beings and the apes.

The devastating impact of such racist colonialist constructs is still evident in certain currents of thought in certain sections of society in Europe, the Americas and Asia. The *négritude* literary movement emerged much later in Paris, in the 1930s. It was launched in the black student and intellectual community by two future poets and politicians, Aimé Césaire from Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal, in response to colonial literature that depicted Africa as a land of savages and cannibals. Asserting itself as a cultural movement, *négritude* became a major lever for enhancing the self-worth of the black world. Lastly that powerful drive for Pan-Africanism ultimately changed attitudes towards racism, which came to be seen as an ethical issue and made the whole world realize that black people's claims against racism were well founded.

The “back to Africa” dream

Pan-Africanism was therefore founded on determination to establish solidarity between Africans and black people of the Diaspora in order to free Africa from the yoke of colonialism. Why did the movement arise at that particular time? It was only after slavery had been abolished, especially in the United States of America and the British West Indies, that the idea of Pan-Africanism began to germinate. The post-slavery environment was still characterized by a pyramidal society, with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom of the ladder.

In demanding equal rights and calling for economic and social integration, the millions of freed black people were deemed to be a potential risk liable to shake the very foundations of that deeply unequal society, which saw them as a threat. In the interests of the ruling order, it was necessary to neutralize them by sending as many of them as possible back to Africa.

As early as 1787, the British had established Sierra Leone as a haven for any black people of the Diaspora who were tempted to return to Africa. Indeed, the city of Freetown was built by former slaves who had been freed by Great Britain, Canada and the United States of America, alongside Africans who had been rescued from the slave ships arrested by the British Navy for trafficking in slaves. After Great Britain had banned slave trading off the coast of Africa in 1807, it maintained a fleet to police the seas, track down any ships plying the illegal trade and free the Africans on board.

The United States of America had a similar scheme in place in Liberia, to which the American Colonization Society, a white Presbyterian Church organization, for philanthropic reasons, transported black people to Africa, drawing on financial support from some southern states and, subsequently, the federal government. However, that relocation scheme was opposed by some African Americans and elites, who considered that the goal was to prevent them from acquiring rights in the United States of America, the land in which they had settled and to whose prosperity they had contributed. In 1820, the first ship sailed from New York, with some 84 people comprising 30 free families on board, all excited at the prospect of returning to the Promised Land. After three months at sea, they arrived in Cape Mesurado (later renamed Liberia), where they settled on land purchased for them by the American Colonization Society from local chiefs.

The small group grew gradually as new arrivals landed. Monrovia, the capital, was founded in 1822 and thrived, owing to the skills of its craftspeople, carpenters, masons, architects, tailors, shopkeepers and farmers, all professions which the newcomers had practised in the United States of

America and which enabled them to form the dominant bourgeoisie. Branches of the American Colonization Society subsequently sprang up throughout the United States of America in a bid to convince black people, especially through their churches, of the benefits of returning to Africa. Some black people even set up their own independent shipping companies to take part in the project. Other countries that still practised slavery such as Brazil, then under Portuguese rule, and Cuba, then under Spanish rule, also authorized, albeit to a smaller extent, freed slaves to emigrate to the places from which they had come — primarily the coastal cities of Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Dahomey (now Benin), Togo, Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Angola.

Liberia played a special role in the emergence of Pan-Africanism since its key proponents had either lived in or passed through the country, which increasingly emerged as an immigration hub for former African slaves from the New World. One such arrival was Dr Martin Robison Delany (1812-1885), who was one of the first black people to be admitted to Harvard Medical School and also the first to achieve the rank of Major in the United States Army. A militant abolitionist, he travelled to Liberia in 1859, then to Lagos and Abeokuta in Nigeria, before returning to fight in the American Civil War to abolish slavery. His famous call for “Africa for the African race and black men to rule them” influenced other prime movers of the emerging pan-African movement, such as Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), from the West Indian island of St Thomas, a Danish colony before becoming part of the United States Virgin Islands. On completing his education on St Thomas, Blyden wanted to become a missionary and moved to the United States of America to study theology, but no institution would admit him because of the colour of his skin.

In New York he frequented members of the Presbyterian Church who were close to the black emigration networks, and the New York Colonization Society suggested that he should continue his studies in Liberia and “civilize and evangelize” the Africans there. Some churches, which were mostly run by white people, trained black people to send them as missionaries and teachers to various parts of Africa. Their teaching played an important role in inspiring and influencing many of their young students, the most deserving of whom

were awarded scholarships by evangelist missions in order to finance their higher education in the United States of America.

Edward Blyden arrived in Monrovia in January 1852 with a scholarship from the Presbyterian Church and continued his studies at Alexander High School, where he later taught Latin, Greek and Mathematics before becoming its principal. Dividing his time between Liberia and Sierra Leone (where he died in 1912), he explored other parts of the continent such as Egypt, where he became interested in Islam and the Arab-Muslim cultural world. That journey was the source of inspiration for his Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, a ground-breaking work of the time, published in London in 1887.

As he had been active in local politics, Blyden, who married a young woman from the American-Liberian elite, was then appointed to a diplomatic post, as Commissioner of the Government of Liberia. In that capacity, he travelled the length and breadth of the United States of America and Europe, promoting Liberia to potential investors and drawing capital into the country. In the United States of America, where black people lived in terror of being lynched and of persecution by racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, Blyden lectured widely in churches and black colleges in an attempt to draw members of the diaspora to Africa. He also publicized his writings on the value of the black man and the role of Africa as the cradle of civilization.

The Ethiopian symbol

Another symbolic country to the pan-Africanists was Ethiopia (then Abyssinia), which, under expansionist threat from Italy, won the hearts and minds of black intellectuals worldwide. **Menelik II** (1889-1913) is also famous for unifying and modernizing Ethiopia, introducing the telegraph, the railway and the automobile. At his side was his wife, **Taytu Betul** (1851-1918), a shrewd but somewhat conservative adviser whose forceful personality impressed most foreign visitors. In 1890, this vibrant nationalist wrote to the Italian ambassador "You want to make Ethiopia your protectorate, but that will never be".



Fig.1. Portrait of Taitu Betul (source: *Le Petit Journal*, 29 March 1896).

This well-read, strong-willed woman also wrote poetry in Amharic. She was scathingly firm when the Emperor seemed to be behaving too timidly towards foreign representatives whom she sensed had designs on her country. During the last years of his reign, when Menelik II was weakened by illness, the Empress Taytu Betul, whose official title meant Light of Ethiopia, ruled this millennial kingdom with an iron fist until she was ousted in 1910.

Penultimate Empress of Ethiopia, it was she who chose the site of the future capital, Addis Ababa, in 1886. An influential woman who was active in politics and in managing the country, she encouraged her husband, Emperor Menelik II, to take up the fight against Italy, which was preparing to invade Ethiopia. In 1896, she contributed to the battle of Adwa by raising a contingent of 3,000 men in her native region of Gondar to reinforce the imperial army. She also organized supplies for troops on the ground.

In March 1896 Emperor **Menelik II** routed the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa. On 1 March 1896, following the Ethiopians' humiliating defeat of the Italians, Taytu Betul appeared on the battlefield on horseback, alongside the Emperor who had come to proclaim victory, thus drawing the world's attention to the extraordinary achievement of this African country, the only one to have routed a European army. Never ever before had an African country crushed a Western army! The victory, widely reported in the international press, galvanized the most knowledgeable elites of the black Diaspora, to whom Ethiopia became the epitome of African resistance to European imperialism and Emperor Menelik II the hero of numerous tales.

Activists from the West Indies, Haiti, the United States of America and Cuba undertook the long journey across the seas to reach Addis Ababa in order to express their admiration for the Emperor and the people of Ethiopia. Among them was the Haitian lawyer, journalist and diplomat, **Benito Sylvain**, who met the Negus Menelik in April 1897. He became an adviser to the emperor and delivered messages of pan-Africanist support at various international meetings, including the First Pan-African Congress (19-22 February 1919).

Resistance by women before the advent of Pan-Africanism

At this stage of the story, it is important to note that long before the idea of Pan-Africanism was formulated in response to Western domination, the history of Africa was interspersed with many acts of resistance, some of which had been organized and led by women. However, those events have all too often been ignored or played down, since the accounts of the period were written by European observers, soldiers, explorers, missionaries, colonial officials and anthropologists who generally held the prejudiced view that African resistance fighters were mere rebels or savages.

African women were portrayed as subordinate – submissive, subdued, passive and subjugated. There was therefore no question of raising their profile by giving them a major role in the written history of Africa. Nevertheless, some accounts have survived of widespread resistance efforts led by African women – both elite women and grass-roots women – who demonstrated a courageous sense of responsibility by seeking to protect their country. Sometimes, there was nothing in their background that marked them out for such a destiny. Quite ordinary mothers and young girls could become heroines overnight, urging their people to react to a foreign threat, and thus becoming leading figures of the nascent African nationalism.

Queen Nzinga Mbandi of Angola (17th century)



Fig.2. Imaginary portrait of Queen Njinga painted in 1830 by the French painter Achille Devéria.

Queen **Nzinga Mbandi**, also known as **Anne Nzinga** (ca. 1581/83 to 1663), entered the annals of history in the seventeenth century because she resisted Portugal's colonial stratagems in Angola for 40 years. Ndongo, renamed Angola by the Portuguese, was one of the first African countries to be colonized, the one most devastated by the slave trade and the one that put up the longest resistance to European invaders.

The people of this prosperous territory had made their living from farming, livestock, crafts and trade until the arrival of the Portuguese, who set up a slave market on the island of Luanda as early as 1557. Then, believing that the country possessed silver mines, they decided to seize it and deport the inhabitants to their new colony, Brazil, to Cuba and to the Americas generally. For nearly one century, the kings of Ndongo, including Nzinga's father, fought tooth and nail to defend their territory but, faced with superior European weaponry, the kingdom gradually crumbled until Nzinga Mbandi came to the throne. She put up stiff heroic resistance, thwarted Portugal's various invasion stratagems and thus delayed the total annexation of the country.

When, in 1622, the princess was sent to Luanda by her brother, who had then succeeded their father, to negotiate a treaty on Ndongo's new borders, she proved to be a firm negotiator with the European delegates, who were stunned by her self-assurance. Refusing to subject her country to the authority of Lisbon and to deliver slaves for the slave trade, as requested by the governor and viceroy of Portugal, Dom João Correia de Souza, she said: "Sire, while the Portuguese have the advantage of possessing a civilization and knowledge

unknown to Africans, the men of Ndongo have the privilege of being in their homeland, amidst of riches that, notwithstanding all his might, the King of Portugal will never be able to give to his subjects.”

After her brother’s death in battle, the princess became Queen in 1624 and took up the torch of the armed struggle. From 1624 to 1663, she combated, sword in hand, Portugal’s conquest of the kingdom of Ndongo (Angola), which had been ruled by her family for generations.

This warrior queen defended her sovereignty until her death at the age of 82. She studied the lifestyles of the Europeans, who were trying to subjugate her, in order to learn more about her enemies and keep them at bay.

While negotiating peace treaties with the Portuguese, she sent spies to Luanda to observe the foreign troops at drill so that her own warriors’ fighting techniques could be adapted to the enemy’s. She attacked at night in order to take the enemy by surprise or during the rainy season when the Europeans were laid low by malaria and, for nearly four decades of conflict, she foiled all traps set to capture her.

When Lisbon resumed its expansion into Ndongo, Anna Nzinga rejected Catholicism and only returned to it later, in 1657, once she had been assured that her enemies would at last respect her sovereignty.

After the Portuguese conquered a large portion of Ndongo, Nzinga retreated eastwards into the bordering territory of Matamba, where she reconsolidated her power base in 1629. She opened the borders of her new kingdom to refugees and organized the evacuation of the people of Ndongo so that they could escape from the Portuguese slave traders. She also secured the support of neighbouring chiefdoms in forming a resistance front. The war-weary Portuguese gave up the hunt for her, and Anne Nzinga ruled Matamba until her death in 1663. She could not, however, prevent partition of the kingdom.

She denounced the slave trade that was bleeding her country dry and joined neighbouring territories in organizing a resistance front against the invaders. An educated woman who spoke perfect Portuguese, Anna Nzinga sparked curiosity in European courts as early as the seventeenth century and is still a source of inspiration for numerous written accounts to this day.

As she defied a European power at a time when whites regarded Africans as inferior, Queen Nzinga became a symbol of resistance who is celebrated not only in her own country, but also in black communities in Brazil and the United States of America. Her memory has been preserved since the seventeenth century in documents, works of fiction, music, drama, cultural events and on websites.

Kimpa Vita of Kongo (18th century)



Sketch on Kimpa Vita drawn by a Capuchin priest in 1706.

Another heroine revered in her country was **Kimpa Vita** (1684?-1706), also known as Dona Beatrice. In the early eighteenth century, she urged her people in the ancient kingdom of Kongo to rise up against the influence of Portuguese missionaries who were suspected of undermining local royalty in favour of the European powers. At the time, Kongo was in the grip of civil war sparked by rivalries among provincial princes who were each staking their claim to the throne of Pedro IV, a weak king who was under the thumb of the missionaries. The people were exhausted by the chaos and famine caused by the never-ending conflict.

In 1704, claiming to have been requested, in a dream, by Saint Anthony to reunite the kingdom, this young lady, some 20 years old and a member of a prominent Bakongo family that had converted to Christianity and was originally from a province in the north of present-day Angola, instigated a popular uprising by triggering a vast movement of political and religious dissent. She launched a country-wide crusade that was followed by thousands of the faithful. Preaching in villages, she appealed to the king to end the war and return to San Salvador, the capital that had been razed and deserted. Kimpa Vita's message was simple: the whites were arming the rival princes in order to precipitate the collapse of the kingdom and seize Kongo's riches.

In a rousing speech, she even criticized the racial hierarchy taught by the Church and urged the people not to be intimidated by Europeans, arguing that the saints in heaven were not all white, as claimed by the priests, for some were black. She spoke of Christ as a universal figure who could easily have been born in Kongo – the true holy land of the people of Kongo. The people should therefore unite and prepare for the return of a strong monarchy that could protect the country.

Within two years, the Antonine Church cult established by Dona Beatrice had drawn thousands of followers, from the grass-roots sections of the population and from the elites, who began to leave the Catholic Church. The rise of this messenger, who tailored the Christian religion to fit a new Africanized Church, greatly irritated the missionaries, not least because she threatened their position in the country, from which they derived huge privileges. It was necessary for them to discredit her in order to weaken her power. The opportunity to do so arose when Kimpa Vita gave birth to a child that she claimed – she herself being a virgin – was the work of the Holy Spirit. The missionaries urged Pedro VI to declare Dona Beatrice a heretic. The young woman was captured in scrubland where she had taken refuge and was burnt alive on 2 July 1706.

Ndete Yalla of Senegal (19th century)



Fig.4. Ndeté Yalla, lithograph produced by Jacques François Llantá in the 19th century. Illustrations from *Esquisses sénégalaises, Physionomie du pays, Peuplades, Commerce, Religions, Passé et avenir, Récits et légendes* by the Reverend Boilat.

Another noteworthy historical resistance fighter was Queen **Ndeté Yalla** (1810-1860), who fought in the 1850s against the French troops who were colonizing Senegal. The French had controlled trading posts in Saint-Louis since the mid-seventeenth century but, in their expansionist drive, they clashed with the small northern kingdom of Walo, along the River Senegal. The people of Walo made a living by trading agricultural produce and fish with the city of Saint Louis, home to the French garrison and a large white community. In traditional Walo society, women were not only economically independent but also exercised leadership in positions of authority, especially when they belonged to the ruling families.

Accordingly, Ndeté Yalla had ascendancy over the titular holder of the throne, Brack² Mambodj Malick, who was considered too lethargic to defend the country against a European power.

The determination of Ndeté Yalla, the new Queen, was already evident in 1847 in her letter to the Governor of Saint-Louis, Senegal: "We have not wronged anyone. This country belongs to us and it must be ruled by us. Saint-Louis belongs to the Governor, the kingdom of Cayor belongs to the Dame³ and

2 Term meaning "king"

3 Term meaning "king"

Walo belongs to the Brack*⁴. These leaders must each govern their land as they see fit”.

She kept the French at bay for some ten years, but the situation grew worse as they gradually made incursions into the region. The Governor of Senegal, Louis Faidherbe, finally decided to annex that unruly territory. One morning in February 1855, he left Saint-Louis with a column of four hundred Senegalese fusiliers, the African military corps of sharpshooters that he had just formed, and laid waste to everything in his path. On 25 February, a violent battle ensued against the Walo army commanded by the Queen's husband, but the army was routed on 18 March by enemy cannon. French forces then burnt down 25 villages, pillaged crops, herded away flocks of sheep, donkeys and horses, and brought 2,000 cows back to the Europeans in Saint-Louis, who had feared a shortage of milk and butter on account of the war.

Queen Ndete Yalla took refuge in the neighbouring kingdom of Cayor, where she hoped, in vain, to regroup the resistance. She died in exile in 1860, grief-stricken because she could not save her country over which she had reigned for 22 years.

Sarraounia Mangou of Niger (19th century)

The French also met resistance in late nineteenth century Niger when a woman, **Sarraounia Mangou**, tried to save her village from the carnage wreaked by a French expedition led by Captain Paul Voulet and his second-in-command, Lieutenant Julien Chanoine, who had set out to conquer Chad.

Wherever the expedition passed, between the former Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) and Niger, the people were subjected to terrible atrocities. The French column, comprising seven white officers and 500 African fusiliers, sought to beat the natives into submission by conducting a policy of terror to dissuade any attempt at resistance. The Voulet and Chanoine mission, officially the

4 Idem

Central Africa-Chad Mission, left thousands dead in its wake. Huts were burnt, prisoners beheaded, young girls raped, pregnant women disembowelled, children hanged from trees at the entrance to their villages and food and livestock looted. The two white commanders incited their men to acts of ever greater cruelty, as in 1896, when they torched the city of Ouagadougou and summarily executed the Mossi people.

Alerted by the terrifying stories that preceded the arrival of the “infernal column”, Sarraouinia Mangou, Queen of the Azna tribes in Hausa territory, persuaded the hunters and warriors in her village of Lougou to try and halt those savage marauders who were decimating the country. When the French approached the area, she sent to them a messenger bearing these words – “skirt my territory or face my warriors”.

Taking this warning as provocation, the two white leaders decided to teach the reckless villagers a lesson. They attacked on 16 April 1889. They positioned their cannon on the hills surrounding the village and wreaked unbridled carnage on the African fighters, armed only with spears and poisoned arrows. At the queen’s command, her fighters retreated into the bush where women, children and the elderly had sought shelter on the previous day. Hiding behind the thickets, they thought that they could stand up to their opponents and, when the shooting resumed, the Aznas resisted as best they could, spurred on by Sarraouina’s entreaties.

Irked by the unexpected opposition, Captain Voulet decided to end the attack before nightfall, saying that it was out of the question for him to “pitch camp in an area threatened by natives”. The fusiliers were ordered to set fire to the bush, and the resultant inferno resounded with the screams of women and children. The assailants stood impassively by watching the dreadful ordeal of their charred victims, without even attempting to assist the wounded. The death toll was so high that they gave up counting the bodies, as had been their wont since they considered their victims to be war trophies. Saved from the flames by her warriors, Sarraouinia Mangou was the only one who tried to stop that devastating marauding spree before France took action to stop those

criminal officers, only to attempt a cover-up later on when it caused a scandal in Paris. For her part, Sarraounia became an icon in Niger.

Yaa Asantewa of Ghana (19th century)



Fig.5. Yaa Asantewaa in batakarikese battle uniform (in an undated photograph).

One decade later, in another region, yet another woman took the initiative in instigating insubordination against a foreign authority: she was the Queen Mother **Yaa Asantewa** (1840?-1921) who, as sister and mother of a chief, held a prominent position in Ashanti society. When, in 1896 Great Britain annexed that powerful confederation, which it renamed the Gold Coast (today Ghana⁵), it exiled the kings and chiefs whom it considered to be too nationalist, including King Nana Prempeh I, in order to prevent any destabilization of its colonial power. Then, in March 1900 in Kumasi, capital of the ancient kingdom, Frederick Hodgson, the British governor, demanded that the famous Golden Stool of Emperor Ossei Tutu, founder of the Ashanti Confederacy in the seventeenth century, be handed over to him. He intended to sit on that precious relic, which symbolized the traditional monarchy, to show that power thenceforth lay in the hands of the Europeans,

and subsequently to send the stool to London as a gift to Queen Victoria. Such a demand was utter sacrilege to Yaa Asantewa, who was then custodian of the royal treasure and leader of the Ejisu (Edweso) district in Ashanti territory.

Deeming the demand an insult to their history and culture, the Queen Mother lambasted the notables and clan leaders for dithering when the Council of Elders was convened to decide on the matter. Some elders called for discussion to persuade the governor to give up the idea. It should be remembered

5 Name of the first west-African empire chosen in 1957 for the new independent Republic.

that the Ashanti had experienced harsh repressions after various uprisings in 1824, 1826, 1874 and 1896. Yaa Asantewa considered, however, that the only possible response to that insolent governor was war on the British who had made their land a protectorate, seized the Ashanti's gold mines and overburdened the people with taxes. In a now-famous speech, she berated the assembly saying "No white man should have dared to speak to Ashanti chiefs in the way the governor spoke to you this morning. Can it be that the pride and bravery of Ashanti no longer mean anything to you? I cannot believe it. This cannot be! I shall tell you this: if you, the men of Ashanti, lack the courage to face up to them, then we shall. We, the women, shall do it. I shall call upon my fellow women and we shall fight the Europeans. We shall fight until the last of us falls on the battlefields". The chiefs bowed their heads in shame.

Determined to drive the British out and bring King Prempeh I back from exile, the Queen Mother issued a call to arms, and thousands of volunteers enlisted under her command. She had them undergo physical and spiritual training in secret and organized her fighters into squadrons, which went undercover in the suburbs of Kumasi. She sent orders to the battalion commanders using a network of messengers who went unnoticed in the general population and, on 28 March 1900, this spirited woman in her fifties, a rifle slung over her shoulder, gave the signal for the uprising. They launched an attack on the fort housing the British representatives, including the governor, officials and an armed protection squad of some 500 auxiliaries from Nigeria.

The siege lasted eight months, during which the assailants sporadically attacked their target, undaunted by the many casualties inflicted by British cannon and guns. Yaa Asantewaa then blocked the fort's food and water supply lines, after which people tried to escape through a hail of Ashanti bullets rather than starve to death. As the wounded could not be treated or the dead buried inside the fort, the bodies were thrown over the stockades.

Some of the besieged died of smallpox and yellow fever. Yaa Asantewa then decided to allow women – wives of the British settlers and African employees

– to leave that hell. London responded by mobilizing its native troops stationed in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, dispatching major reinforcements to deal with the Ashanti, who were at the time supported by more fighters from allied provinces. On 11 July 1900, British forces laid siege to Kumasi and, after a fierce battle, freed the governor and some of the wounded, who were evacuated by riverboat to Accra.

The hunt for the resistance fighters then began in earnest. The ringleaders were gradually arrested, except for Yaa Asantewa, who had vanished without trace; but in January 1901, on hearing that her daughter had been arrested, the Queen Mother decided to give herself up to the British. She was deported to the Seychelles, where she died in October 1921 after 20 years in exile. This episode is remembered as the “War of the Golden Stool”.

The above examples are not at all an exhaustive account of anti-colonial resistance initiatives led by women. The historical heritage of many African countries is replete with similar experiences that are insufficiently publicized. The time is ripe for historians to begin to turn the spotlight on them for, now that women’s leadership is being highlighted and promoted worldwide, well beyond their countries of origin, an entire swathe of African history must no longer be left in the shadows merely because the protagonists were women. Resistance movements led by women in the past must even be recognized as heralding the rejection of Western oppression that was destined to be the defining feature of Pan-Africanism. They also deserve to be taught systematically to the younger generations when the *Pan-African Women’s Day* is marked nationally and yearly throughout the continent.

The influence of Pan-Africanism on African resistance

With regard to the origins of Pan-Africanism, as noted above Ethiopia's victory over Italy was pivotal in raising an awareness of the oppression of black people and in winning hearts and minds for the cause. It then remained to take action to raise the profile of black people – the “*maligned race*”, to quote Benito Sylvain – in order to reinstate people of African origin and descent in their rightful place in world affairs and so change the course of history.

For, at the dawn of the twentieth century, the entire black world was under Western domination. After the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), which had endorsed the partition of Africa, the continent had come under Belgian, British, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish control.

The conquest was coming to a close and, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, which had declared independence on 26 July 1847, the continent was divided into colonies ruled by European governments determined to extract maximum profit from the natural resources and local workforce, while claiming to be on a civilizing mission. As soon as the old territorial areas – kingdoms, city-states, groups of clans – had been dismembered and traditional societies disrupted, people from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds were grouped together within the new colonial borders and dispossessed of their economies, culture and sovereignty. Their only common feature was total dependence on a foreign master. On the other side of the Atlantic, in the United States of America, some 30 years after the abolition of slavery, black people remained trapped in a segregationist straitjacket that precluded all economic, civic and social integration, while the colonizers banned “coloured people”⁶ in the West Indies from all involvement in governing their country and society. That collective sense of revolt turned Pan-Africanism from an idea into a movement.

6 Term used in the West Indian colonies and in the United States of America to describe non-whites of whatever heritage.

One of the steps in that process was the facilitation of meetings between Africans and black people of the Diaspora. In that context, it is useful to remember the role played by some American evangelical churches – both white and black – in initiating contacts between the young Africans sent to study in the United States of America in the last decade of the nineteenth century and African American and West Indian activists. Religious congregations – some of which had supported the earlier abolitionist movement before participating in the civil-rights struggle – were thus the first to provide funding on American soil for Africa-themed seminars, at which Africans and black people from the United States of America, the West Indies and Europe met. In 1884, for example, the *African Methodist Episcopal Church*, a black breakaway branch of the *Methodist Episcopal Church* of Philadelphia that had been deserted by its black flock on account of discrimination, held a seminar to kindle black people's interest in Africa.

A few years later, in August 1893, the World Congress on Africa was held in Chicago on the initiative of the *American Missionary Association*. One of its icons, Bishop **Henry McNeal Turner** (1834-1915), supported the idea of involving “civilized” black Americans in the development of Africa. Taking advantage of the congress, the bishop promoted the idea of sending educated African Americans to evangelize and train Africans, not only in Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa, but throughout the continent. It is true that it was not always easy to convince the black majority to return to a continent that had failed to defend itself against the slave trade. Moreover, many of those who had travelled to Liberia had returned downhearted to America with tales of hostile, savage lands, rife with disease and malnutrition. For some people, this doubtless had the effect of undermining any attempts to idealize the ancestral land.

Nevertheless, African students, who faced the same segregation as that experienced by black Americans, experienced at first hand the mobilization strategies employed to fight for black people's rights. Not only did this make them more keenly aware of colonial rule in their respective countries, but they also became more receptive to pan-African ideals. Consequently, their nationalist convictions had been strengthened by the time they returned home, although their level of education was such that they were mostly destined to become adjuncts to the colonial administration.

It was thus on this informal mix of intellectuals, students and ordinary people that the early congresses and conferences promoted by the early proponents of Pan-Africanism tested their appeal. The number of meetings increased in the first half of the twentieth century, and some were held in European cities where the first elites from the colonies were being educated together. Tactically, moreover, it was in Europe – at the heart of the European imperialist system – that the organizers felt that “*the voice from bleeding Africa*”, to quote Edward Wilmot Blyden, should resound. Furthermore, according to **Sylvester Williams** (1868-1911), a London-based Trinidadian barrister who founded the *Pan-African Association* and organized the first Pan-African Conference, it was time for black people to begin to fight for their own interests instead of leaving it to the whim of “*white paternalists*”.

Those conferences were springboards for some charismatic militants, who were so outstanding at various stages of the movement's onward march, that the advent of Pan-Africanism has been attributed arbitrarily to one or other of those prominent figures.

The first Pan-African Conference in London (20th century)

Billed as a world gathering of black people, the first pan-African conference was held from 13 to 25 July 1900 in Westminster Hall in London. As the Chair of the Conference, the African-American Bishop Alexander Walters of the *African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, said in his opening address, “for the first time in history black people had gathered from all parts of the globe to discuss and improve the condition of their race, to assert their rights and organize so that they might take an equal place among nations”.

In the *Address to the Nations of the World*, the conference issued a call for an end to colour prejudice and racial discrimination – “*the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of colour?*”, as **William Edward Burghardt Du Bois** (1868-1963) put it – and for self-rule in the colonies. It should be recalled that four years earlier in London, the *Congress of the Second Socialist International* had asserted the right of peoples to self-determination.

Widely covered by British newspapers, the conference attracted Africans from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, as well as the personal representative of Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, and the famous Bénéto Sylvain who, the following year (1901), published his doctoral thesis in law entitled “*Du sort des indigènes dans les colonies d'exploitation*” [*On the Fate of Indigenous Peoples under Colonial Exploitation*], which he defended in 1899 at the Faculty of Law in Paris. The largest group of delegates was from the West Indies – Haiti, Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Cuba, St. Lucia, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Antigua. A small group of black American and Canadian leaders and activists attended, of course, as did some white humanists. The mostly English-speaking black participants comprised professors, lawyers, representatives of the Anglican and Episcopal churches, journalists and a number of students who were being educated in Britain.

Two black women made noteworthy submissions, but were rarely mentioned alongside heavyweights such as **Henry Sylvester Williams**, who organized the conference; the famous **W.E.B Du Bois**, a sociologist, historian, professor, author and columnist who was the first black person to receive a PhD from Harvard University in 1895; and **Booker T. Washington** (1856-1915), educator and founder, in 1881, of the renowned Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, the first educational institution for black people, which also admitted African students. The women were **Anna Julia Cooper**, the famous lecturer and activist, who taught Mathematics, Latin and French in Washington and was the first black woman to be awarded a doctorate at the Sorbonne in Paris; and **Anna H. Jones**, a linguist and graduate of the University of Michigan, who taught in a school in Kansas City. Other black women attending included the American educator and journalist, **Fannie Barrier Williams**; **Jane Rose Roberts**, the 82-year-old widow of the first President of Liberia, Joseph Jenkins Roberts; and the activist **A. Pulcherie Pierre**, from Trinidad.

The extraordinary track record of **Anna Julia Cooper**, née Haywood (1858-1964), deserves further attention. Born in slavery in North Carolina of a white father, who was no doubt the owner of the plantation, she lived through the civil war, segregation, the advent of feminism, the women's suffrage movement, the civil-rights movement and Pan-Africanism. After the abolition of slavery, she was lucky enough to be given an education and then be admitted to a teacher-training college opened by the Protestant Episcopal Church to train black teachers. While working as a Mathematics tutor to make a living, she continued to study Mathematics, Science, Latin and Greek – subjects that were not open to black women at the time.

After obtaining a Master's degree in Mathematics in 1887 at Oberlin College in Ohio, an institution founded by abolitionists and the first to accept blacks and women, she taught at a black high school in Washington, of which she was principal for four years. Soon she began to campaign, through various associations, against racial segregation and for women's right to education, eventually becoming a much sought-after speaker.



Fig.6. Anna Julia Cooper
(source : *A Voice from the South*, 1892).

Her speeches and writings were collated into a book entitled *A Voice from the South: By a Woman from the South* and published in 1892, the year in which she founded the *Coloured Women's League* in Washington. Anna Julia Cooper taught for several years at Lincoln University in Missouri but, owing to the institutional racism that forced black high-achievers to maintain a low-key profile, she returned to high-school teaching. Her career and her struggle to urge black people to aim for higher education, in spite of the barriers posed by segregation, encouraged many young African Americans to dare to apply to Ivy-league colleges.

Between 1910 and 1914, Anna Julia Cooper spent three years in Paris preparing for a doctoral thesis, for which she enrolled at the University of Columbia in 1914. She could not, however, devote herself fully to her studies because she, widowed at the age of 21 after only two years of a childless marriage, decided to raise her deceased half-brother's five children when their mother died. Undaunted, she had her student file and her grant transferred from Columbia to the Sorbonne and ten years later, in 1925, she defended her thesis – in French and at the age of 66 – on *The Attitude of France on the Question of Slavery Between 1789 and 1848*. Anna Julia Cooper thus became the fourth African American to be awarded a doctorate.

It was W.E.B. Du Bois who introduced her to the pan-African ideal. He met her in Washington, at the circle of the African American Academy, founded in 1897, and was impressed by the breadth of her general knowledge and her combativeness. She was the only black woman allowed to sit on the Executive Committee of the Pan-African Conference in London, and the audience was deeply moved by her paper on "*The Negro Problem in America*". Anna Julia Cooper was also involved in drafting the delegates' petition to Queen

Victoria denouncing apartheid in Rhodesia and South Africa and discriminatory treatment of Africans in the British colonies.

The influence of Pan-Africanism on the organization of African resistance

In working to unite the protest movements against European domination, the first conference gave fresh impetus and direction to piecemeal action that was being taken throughout Africa. The aim was to provide a unifying policy framework for all national aspirations and to ensure that Africans' claims to freedom were expressed more effectively. This resulted in the gradual emergence of more structured associations and organizations, and the development of more collective forms of action, along the lines of the *South African Native National Congress*, established in January 1912, which became the main opposition movement to the white government in South Africa, before it was renamed the *African National Congress (ANC)* in 1923. Its leaders did not, however, include women, who therefore decided to struggle against apartheid on their own.

In the same year (1912) in which the *South African Native National Congress* was established, women resolved to show that they did not intend to remain on the sidelines and so they founded the *Native and Coloured Women's Association* to coordinate their struggle. They proved to be remarkably effective, especially in the Orange Free State where, from 1912 to 1920, they successfully opposed the white minority-enacted *Pass Laws*, under which a kind of internal passport was used to monitor black people's whereabouts and restrict their freedom of movement.

They used on theretofore unusual channels of expression, including petitions to the authorities and parliament, mass rallies and passive-resistance campaigns, and nothing seemed to break their resolve – not even the threat of prison, where they were thrown in significant numbers. The passion of these women's movements and their growing politicization ultimately led the *South African Native National Congress* to found the *Bantu Women's League* in 1918. The

League was chaired by **Charlotte Maxeke** (1874-1939), the first South African woman to graduate from an American university and known for her crusade for the education of young blacks.

Educated by a missionary church, she became a schoolteacher in Kimberley in 1885. A gifted singer and musician, she was also a member of a religious choir that performed Zulu choir music, with which she toured England between 1891 and 1893. She even performed solo before Queen Victoria at a prestigious London concert hall.



Fig.7. Portrait of Charlotte Manye Maxeke.

Following this success, Charlotte Manye joined another tour that took her to Canada and the United States of America in 1894. She then became one of the African students who received funding from evangelical churches to pursue their education in the United States of America. Awarded a scholarship by the *African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC)*, Charlotte attended the black Wilberforce University in Ohio from 1895, where the famous professor and activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, taught. She graduated from Wilberforce with a Bachelor of Science degree, and it was there that she met her future husband, Marshall Maxeke, who became a pastor.

On her return to South Africa in 1901, Charlotte Maxeke became a teacher. She raised funds to build a school providing primary and secondary education in the Cape in 1908. A respected missionary and educator, member of the South African branch of AMEC and a women's rights activist, she became in 1918 the first president of the *Bantu Women's League*, the largest women's political organization in the country.

When, in 1933, the *Bantu Women's League* was succeeded by the *National Council of African Women*, she remained the Chair. Heavily involved in the women's struggle against apartheid, Charlotte Maxeke became a prominent activist against the pass laws. Women were compelled to continue their

struggle along parallel but separate lines because they were admitted to the Nationalist Party only as observers without the right to vote. Disappointed, they nonetheless called ceaselessly for their representatives to be recognized, not least since they faced the same white repression as men and they, too, were risking their lives in the armed struggle.

By keeping up the pressure, they managed to establish the *ANC Women's League* in 1952, followed, in 1954, by the *Federation of South African Women*, which made female emancipation a priority. These South African women were responsible for setting a landmark date in the country's history – 9 August 1956. On that day, despite police threats, 20,000 women marched on the seat of government in Pretoria to demand the end of the Pass Controls. One of the leaders bearing the petition was the prominent activist, **Lillian Masediba Ngoyi** (1911-1980). A former textile-industry trade unionist, General-Secretary of the *ANC Women's League* and Chair of the *Federation of South African Women*, which she had helped to establish, she was the first woman to be admitted to the Executive Committee of the ANC in 1957. Arrested several times, imprisoned and placed under house arrest, she paid a heavy price for her struggle.

After the Pan-African Conference in London, five more conferences were held in the interwar years. The anti-colonial movement grew and matured in that period, as its activists honed their programmes and practice. Seeking to internationalize their struggle, they drew media attention to their demands in order to alert public opinion, petitioned the League of Nations (forerunner of the United Nations) on several occasions – especially during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 – and disseminated information worldwide on attacks and repression against black people in Africa and the Americas.

Although the question of freedom remained on the agenda, all hopes then focused on the emancipation of the colonies. Indeed, the context had changed since the First World War, in which Africans (almost a million), West Indians and black Americans, who had been drafted into a war that did not concern them, had helped to liberate Europe from the threat of German invasion.

Yet, despite their sacrifices, their status hardly changed in spite of the promises that had been made. Those black people – mostly of lowly station, unlike the leaders of the Pan-African movement who had met each other on European soil – did not understand why the colonizers continued to keep them under domination when they had defended them against external aggression. On returning to their villages, African veterans – and those of the Second World War even more so, since many of them had learnt to read or had acquired technical skills in the army – played a key role in raising awareness and disseminating anti-colonial ideas among the masses.

The same brutal segregation awaited the black American soldiers when they returned home, despite lofty declarations by the United States of America and the Soviet Union about the *rights of peoples to self-determination*. White ingratitude, compounded by the frustration of the educated black American elite who had often studied in the West but been relegated to subordinate positions by colonial, racist regimes, brought the oppressed together and strengthened their resolve to defend a common cause.

Second Pan-African meeting in Paris

That was the watchword of the second meeting, the *First Pan-African Congress*, held from 19 to 21 February 1919, in Paris, and chaired by W.E.B. Du Bois. He emerged as the figurehead of the movement until his death in 1963 in Ghana, where he had settled at the invitation of President Kwame Nkrumah. At the conference, Du Bois was supported by Blaise Diagne, the first black African elected to the French Chamber of Deputies (representing Senegal) and the Government's Commissioner-General with responsibility for recruiting African soldiers for the First World War. Diagne had personally sought official permission for the Congress to be held in France. Fifty-seven delegates travelled from the French, British and Portuguese-speaking colonies in Africa (including Algeria), the West Indies, the Belgian Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Haiti and the United States of America.

However, the display of pan-African unity was misleading. Rivalry inevitably surfaced between certain leaders who felt that they had a more legitimate claim to the title of *Father of Pan-Africanism* or between prominent figures who coveted the status that might attach to their name. Consequently, the Paris Pan-African Conference, which brought the intellectual elite together, should be considered in relation to the first *International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World*, organized by Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in New York on 1 August 1920. It attracted 25,000 people, with delegations from 25 countries, including Nigeria, Liberia, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone and other colonies in western, central and southern Africa, the West Indies, South America, Europe and Asia.

Furthermore, thousands of militants flocked from the four corners of the United States of America. After the morning's discussion and debate, a large crowd watched an amazing parade through the streets of Harlem in the afternoon, where, to the sound of eighteen bands, the UNIA paramilitary legion, comprising men and women in uniform, nurses from the Black Cross that had been established by UNIA to treat black people in America and Africa and youth groups marched in unison. New York had never seen such a show! The proceedings of the Congress were of an equally high quality, calling as it did for an end to lynching and discrimination, for black history to be taught in schools and for solidarity with Africa.

Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), a former print works employee and an avid reader who was deeply influenced by the writings of Edward Blyden, emerged as a champion of Pan-Africanism. An advocate of the *Renaissance of the Black Man* and *Black Pride*, originally from Jamaica, he dreamt of rebuilding a black nation in Africa, became a leading UNIA activist in the United States of America in the 1920s. He founded the association in Jamaica in 1914 and intended to make it a melting pot for all the black people of the world. In 1916, Garvey emigrated to the United States of America and, the following year, opened the Harlem section of UNIA in New York. Within two months, more than 2,000 people had become members. Thanks to the women's division set up by Amy Ashwood Garvey, his then wife, women were at the forefront of UNIA, which gave them positions of responsibility in their

various bodies. This was in contrast to the Pan-African Conferences, at which women were marginalized although most Pan-African Congresses could be held only because of the contributions and fundraising activities of the African American women's associations.

Marcus Garvey founded his own newspaper, the *Negro World*, a pan-African weekly with a print run of some 200,000 copies. It was translated into French and Spanish and became the most widely read black newspaper in the world. His editorials calling for whites to be chased out of Africa earned him international renown. By 1920, UNIA boasted a membership of one million people and had a network of 1,200 local sections representing 40 countries in the major regions of the world where black people were present (North and South America, West Indies, Africa and Europe).

A supporter of the idea of a return to Liberia, Garvey launched numerous humanitarian and commercial activities in a bid to tempt skilled African Americans to take part in developing Africa. He founded the *Black Star Line*, a shipping company possessing four transatlantic ships for passenger and goods transport. Moreover, advocating *black economic defence*, Garvey persuaded thousands of small savers from the black middle classes to invest in his businesses. This enabled him to establish myriad companies and services that only employed blacks – hotels, restaurants, workshops, factories, schools, universities, health services, health centres, publishing houses and employment agencies. He called on blacks to produce goods for their community and to aim to “buy black” first.

Despite his eccentricities – he loved to parade around in braided uniform wearing a cocked hat with a plume of feathers – the economic implications of his ideological struggle to improve the lot of black people gave this charismatic speaker a much broader, more popular appeal than that enjoyed by the intellectual analysis of other pan-Africanists such as Du Bois. He began to give white rulers in the United States of America and in the colonies cause for concern. Owing to the impact of his editorials exalting racial pride or urging people to free themselves from colonialism, and his impudent business success, he was placed under surveillance by the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI). His newspaper was banned throughout the British colonies and activists of “Garveyism” were persecuted or imprisoned. When his shipping company went bankrupt, the consequences were disastrous. Accused of defrauding his shareholders, Marcus Garvey was sentenced to prison in 1925 and deported from the United States of America in 1927. Exiled to Jamaica, he resumed his mass meetings, electrifying the crowds. Finally, in 1935, he settled in London where he died on 10 June 1940, having never set foot in Africa.

The fight for independence

After Paris, the Pan-African movement continued to keep the flame alive in three more meetings, before the outbreak of the Second World War slowed down the process: London on 28 and 29 August 1921; followed by two sessions in 1923 – London once again, on 7 and 8 November, followed by Lisbon on 1 and 2 December; and lastly the meeting held in New York on 21 to 24 August 1927. In addition to the American organizations, the anti-colonial torch was kept burning by some European political parties such as the Soviet Communist Party and the Communist and Socialist Internationals, which always invited African nationalists to their meetings and events, at which they could meet other anti-imperialist activists from Western Europe, Central and South America, the West Indies and Asia. When the *League against Imperialism and for National Independence* was established in Brussels in February 1927, the guests of the Soviet Comintern included African leaders and intellectuals such as Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta and the Senegal’s Lamine Senghor, who ran an organization known as the *Committee for the Defence of the Negro Race*, as well as South African and North African activists.

While the intellectual elite of the black world was rebelling against Europe and the United States of America, the peoples of Africa, crushed by the colonial system, were far from adopting a similar stance. That said, there were uprisings on the ground when the colonial pressure became unbearable or threatened the interests of some social and economic stakeholders.

The most memorable protests involving women were those in which African tradeswomen clashed with colonial officialdom. Market women were often at the forefront of *tax revolts* whenever European capitals decided to levy new taxes to finance the colonial administration, develop local infrastructure and oblige the “natives” to enter the cash economy. Since the tax was payable in cash, the Africans faced the choice of either using their fields, not to grow food for the local community, but to produce – for a mere pittance – cash crops (groundnut, coffee, cocoa, etc.) for export to the European market or to find work as unskilled labourers in order to earn a wage. For farmers, the tax was often compounded by a “labour tax”, which basically committed them to a period of forced labour. While the British made little use of this, France, Belgium and Portugal institutionalized the practice, which traumatized millions of Africans. As a result, not content with capturing the land of the “natives”, the colonizers pressed the administration to provide them, through wholesale requisitions, with a workforce that could be exploited at will on their farms or in construction work and infrastructure maintenance.

Political activism of certain women's organizations

In Nigeria, for example, where there had been women's pressure groups and associations for generations before colonization, rural women and female traders were at the forefront of numerous protest movements that brought thousands of women from different regions together to oppose colonial interference in their country. In their forms of action and determination, they easily rivalled the British and American suffragettes of the early twentieth century who fought for women's right to vote. Notified by word-of-mouth, they organized popular marches punctuated by sit-ins, sang songs deriding the white officials, conducted noisy debate and took resolute action. Nothing would stop those women activists, who were determined to succeed even if it meant recourse to provocation. Large-scale demonstrations initiated by associations of women traders thus ignited the coastal region of Calabar, in the south-east of the country, in October 1925, after the British decided to require market women to have a licence. Such successive taxes reduced women's purchasing power in a society in which they were used to degree measure

of financial independence from their husbands, and their families' survival depended on their farming or trading activities. Groups of women blocked the roads, burnt down markets and even removed their children from school to display their anger.

The standoff continued intermittently, only to reignite in November 1929 when the traders learnt of yet another tax, the *Native Revenue Ordinance*, which was to be levied on all adults. Previously, only men, as heads of household, had been taxed. This measure therefore entailed double taxation on low-income households. It was even rumoured that the British intended to levy a tax on the goats that the women kept to feed their families!

The uprising started in the city of Oloko in November 1929, after a meddling widow named **Nwanyeruwa** urged other women to oppose the decision, and 10,000 women swept in from Aba, Oloko, Owerri, Calabar, Port Harcourt and surrounding villages to demonstrate, for days on end, outside the offices of the British administration. In exasperation, some women even attacked white-owned factories and shops and set the native courts alight. Local leaders who had helped the colonizers to collect taxes were attacked physically. In an attempt to break up the demonstration, armed troops killed 55 women and injured 50 others, all of which further heightened the tension. The case caused a great stir in Great Britain and a commission of inquiry was called. The authorities reversed their decision in December 1929. The event is remembered in the history of Nigeria as the *Aba Women's Riot* or *The Women's War*.



Fig.8. Aba women in Nigeria fighting against the British colonialists.

Equally effective were the numerous protests organized by the market women of Lagos who, in 1920, formed the highly combative *Lagos Market Women Association*, which controlled 84 vendor associations representing 16 regional markets in the Lagos area. Divided by business line – rice traders association, sellers of *gari* (cassava flour), beans,

vegetables, meat, fish, etc., the women methodically followed their leaders' call. Their most famous leader was **Alimotou Pelewura**, a Yoruba from Lagos who began at a tender age to sell fish with her mother, before inheriting the activity from her around 1900 and developing it into a wholesale business. An astute businesswoman, she began to buy canoes regularly in order to build up her own fishing fleet, and she had a fish shed built. In 1920, she also began to manage the biggest meat market in Lagos, and so she was chosen by the women to head the *Lagos Market Women Association*, where she remained until the 1950s.

Illiterate, as were her companions, the woman now known as Madam Pelewura began by setting up a contribution system of three pence per trader per week, to pay two secretaries to draft their petitions to the colonial administration and translate their discussions with the British. The money raised was also used to pay lawyers to defend their comrades who had been imprisoned or fined after a brawl. A seasoned negotiator, Alimotou Pelewura headed off many crises but was unbending in her defence of the Nigerian market women. This was the case in 1932, when the Europeans were increasing the tax burden throughout the colonies in an attempt to mitigate the impact of the 1929 economic crisis on their colonial finances, at the risk of worsening the plight of the people. Protests broke out in various regions, but in Lagos the British had trouble containing the pugnacity of the market women led by Pelewura. In January 1932, these women, who were largely responsible for keeping urban areas supplied with food, formed a committee to express their grievances to the white administrator. The planned tax was shelved in due course and, as a result of that victory, Pelewura became the women's representative on the local council that represented the traditional authorities in Lagos.

Eight years later, when Europe was caught up in the turmoil of the Second World War, the administration sparked renewed tension when it sought to tax market women who supposedly earned an annual income of at least £50. Times were then very hard for African people, who faced food rationing and shortages due to the *war effort*, which involved requisitioning some of the grain and foodstuffs produced in the colonies to feed the armies in Europe. In addition, the administration decided to influence prices by underpaying

small farmers and controlling the market women's activities. The women were furious at what they perceived to be an injustice, since the official rates took no account of transporting or storing the produce and were artificially reduced to a rate below cost price, the secret intention being to favour import-export companies and British speculators trading in food commodities. Not only did this decision disrupt the traditional channels controlled by the African market women, but it also spelt ruin for them – although they were already prepared to operate at very low margins. Aggrieved by the tax hikes, price controls and requisitions of their produce at rock-bottom prices, more than 100 women gathered outside the office of the Commissioner of the colony of Lagos on 16 December 1940 to remind him that the government had previously promised not to tax women. Then they returned with a petition signed with more than two hundred thumbprints, in which they denounced London's determination to tax the women of Nigeria, who had already agreed to so many sacrifices in furtherance of the war effort.

Since no action was taken, they called a produce strike and closed down the markets (to stop supplying European customers; they used the black market to feed their countrymen) and continued their protest marches outside the administrator's offices. On 18 December 1940, there were some 7,000 protesters, according to the local edition of the *Daily Mail*. In an address to the crowd, the High Commissioner said that English women paid taxes, too; to which Alimotou Pelewura retorted that the money was made in England, whereas Africans were poor "owing to many factors over which they had no control". She added that it was the women of Lagos who were bearing the brunt of the hardship caused by the war in Europe; they had to feed and clothe their unemployed husbands and relatives, as well as help the men to pay their taxes, lest they be sent to prison for non-payment. Since the women remained adamant, the governor decided to amend the law by raising the level of taxable income to £200 instead of the £50 originally announced, which ultimately meant that only a very small number of wealthy market women were affected.

Following that half-victory, the hatchet was unburied in 1941 when the administration decided once again to increase price controls on food commodities and oversee the distribution channels managed by the women, who relied on their own networks of farmers, transport and storage companies, wholesalers and retailers. Since the men had been drafted into the colonial army, the agricultural workforce had dwindled and many farmers had left the fields for the cities in search of unskilled work, which resulted in lower agricultural output, food shortages and inflation, all of which was compounded by food requisitions for Europe. The governor organized food rationing and opened grocery stores – which often ran out of stock. On account of the shortages, the Nigerians had to wait in long queues to buy food in a country that had been food self-sufficient in pre-colonial days. The colonizers also set official prices for produce and dispatched price-checker squads to the markets, much to the fury of the market women.

Pelewura and her colleagues initially attempted to reason peacefully with the uncompromising Captain Pullen, the Commissioner of the colony, by participating in several consultation meetings. They then threatened to close the markets again and resume black-market trading. Against a background of continuing protest meetings and petitioning, small groups of rice, flour and palm oil sellers set up boulders on the road to Lagos to block the lorries used by the administration to transport food for export. They scattered the contents on the ground. In September 1942, some market women were arrested, dragged before the courts and sentenced to one month in prison for failing to comply with the official selling prices, but white traders and European companies that acted in the same way were left undisturbed. Pelewura's *Lagos Market Women Association* embarked on a campaign to denounce such discrimination against African women, sending many letters of protest and petitions to the Governor, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and the government Commissioner. Some nationalist leaders also joined in the protest, which hit the headlines in the local press before being taken up by the London newspapers. The Lagos market women resisted for four years in all, until the British administration discontinued price controls in 1945.



Fig.9. Aline Sitoé Diatta.

Another example of rebellion against the *war effort* was that started by the young Senegalese **Aline Sitoé Diatta** (1920-1944). A servant to a French family in Dakar, one day she decided, after having a mystical dream, to return to her native Casamance, a region in south-west Senegal, where she instigated a popular uprising that shook the region between 1940 and 1943.

As she denounced looting by the colonial administration, which was crushing the villagers with taxes, confiscating their crops and livestock and stopping the farmers from growing their crops in order to force them to work in the rice export business, the 20 year-old young woman, who had a limp as a result of polio, appeared to be a true prophet in the eyes of the people, who were outraged at the harshness of the colonial system. Part of the Casamance region rebelled and refused to let their men be forcibly conscripted to serve as cannon fodder on the European fronts. Fearing that sedition might spread, the French response clicked into gear. On the night of 28 January 1943, a military detachment laid siege to Aline Sitoé Diatta's house and opened fire, killing a woman who had the misfortune to have the same light complexion as the young resistance activist. To stop the repression that had descended on the villagers, Aline gave herself up to the French forces on the day after the killing, on 8 May 1943. She was tortured, sent to Mali and imprisoned in Timbuktu, where she died the following year as a result of ill-treatment.

Pan-Africanists tried to bring to the attention of European public opinion the injustices inflicted upon Africans – land grabbing, monopolization of natural resources, exploitation of people, conscription of young Africans to fight in European wars, forced labour to build roads, towns, railways, or even for use in the colonizers' personal businesses, transformation of rural areas and destruction of traditional agriculture in favour of export monoculture, food rationing to further the war effort, racial discrimination, injustices and abuses resulting from the French *Code de l'indigénat* [Native Code], denial of

freedoms or any political and social advancement of the “natives”, frustration of the black elites who were belittled by whites ...

The decade after the Second World War was instructive for colonized peoples worldwide. Indeed, Africans were closely following the liberation struggles in Asia, such as in Indochina where the Communist leader Hô Chi Minh (1890-1969) proclaimed the independence of Vietnam in 1945 before launching a protracted guerrilla war against France – whose troops included African soldiers. France, the colonial power, was defeated and lost its Indochinese Empire in 1954. Later that same year, it faced the outbreak of war in Algeria, led by the separatist National Liberation Front, which won independence in 1962. In India, too, the charismatic leader Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), who had been imprisoned for ten years for anticolonial activism, wrested his country's independence from Great Britain in August 1947. Moreover, in May 1945, the United Nations, founded in San Francisco, proclaimed before the world “*the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples*”. Giving voice to representatives from numerous nationalist movements, the United Nations became a forum in which colonial powers were impugned, and a sounding board that made Western opinion aware of the abuse of oppressed peoples, particularly in Africa.

The fifth Pan-African Congress

Those onslaughts on imperialism emboldened many of the colonized to heighten the pressure in order to loosen the colonial yoke. The time was sufficiently ripe for the nationalists' aspirations and demands for independence to have a decisive impact on a Europe that had been debilitated by four years of war. Moreover, it was no coincidence that the fifth Pan-African Congress was held soon after the war ended, from 15 to 19 October 1945, in Manchester, United Kingdom.

The fifth congress gave new direction to Pan-Africanism by turning it decisively towards Africa, which had no intention of continuing to submit to colonial

oppression after helping to free Europe from the yoke of Nazi Germany. Emphasis shifted towards decolonization, as a prelude to full independence of the continent and the construction of its unity. Many nationalist leaders from English-speaking Africa travelled to Manchester, where two important voices were heard – those of **Kwame Nkrumah** (1909-1972) and of **George Padmore** (1902-1959). Nkrumah was one of the African students who had educated in the United States of America and he had just finished his studies in history and philosophy. He was then living in London, which he left in 1947 to enter politics in his native Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), which, in 1957, became the first West African country (apart from Liberia) to accede to independence. The former French protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia in North Africa won their independence one year earlier, in March 1956.

George Padmore, whose real name was Malcolm Nurse, was a journalist and a writer, originally from Trinidad in the West Indies, who had moved to London after living in the United States of America. He had a large circle of African acquaintances and wrote for black newspapers worldwide. He is remembered for alerting the public to the colonial atrocities that were being perpetrated in various parts of the continent, especially in South Africa. Padmore was the linchpin of the fifth congress, which was marked by the activism of Nkrumah, who wanted the pan-African movement to be a platform for the demands of a colonized Africa. Black Americans, who could not fight on several fronts, decided for their part to focus on the struggle for civil rights and recognition in the United States of America.

Forty-five years after the first pan-African meeting, at which only two women had taken the floor, only one woman took the floor at the Manchester congress. Pointing to women's lack of visibility in the pan-Africanist movement, **Amy Ashwood Garvey** (1897-1969) bluntly shook the movement's leaders out of their complacency when she reminded them that women, too, were active in combating racism and colonialism, and so should not be relegated to domestic chores alone.

Divorced from Marcus Garvey who, after only three months of marriage had left her for one of her best friends, Amy Ashwood had gained a reputation as

a feminist and a pan-Africanist. It was with her that Garvey founded UNIA in Jamaica, before they married in the United States of America in 1919.



Fig.10. Amy Aswood Garvey.

Furthermore, it was she who was the linchpin of UNIA when they transferred its headquarters to America. Lastly, it was she who had the idea of opening the movement up to women, who proved to be important donors and volunteer fundraisers to the organization. Amy Garvey Ashwood also helped to establish *The Negro World* newspaper and planned to open a vocational school for UNIA. Furthermore, she was a director of the *Negro Star Line* shipping company.

Wounded by a separation that she never accepted, especially as her husband had accused her of infidelity and embezzlement as grounds for the divorce, Amy Ashwood Garvey continued to travel through the United States of America, the West Indies, South America, Europe and Africa, spreading the philosophy of Garveyism and calling for Africa and the Diaspora to unite. Living between New York and London, she finally settled in the British capital, where she worked with several African student associations. She frequented assiduously the circles of intellectuals and nationalist leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore, and helped them to organize the Manchester congress. The following year, in 1946, she set off to discover Africa and made an emotional journey to Ghana in search of the roots of her great-grandmother, a slave who she had learnt was from the Ashanti. She was close to President Tolbert and spent three years in Liberia until 1949. She then devoted herself with promoting the emergence of women's organizations in Africa and the West Indies, and remained an activist until she died in Jamaica in 1969.

Owing to greater awareness and acts of resistance within and beyond the continent, several victories were wrested from the colonial powers in the immediate post-war period: recognition of African political parties, development

of trade-union movements, better organization of the anti-colonial struggle, involvement of newspapers, associations, clubs and student movements in building political awareness, wider dissemination of pan-Africanist ideas and the spread of transnational cultural movements. With the emergence of political parties and their demands for an end to forced labour and to discrimination and for black people to be given the right to vote, the masses were drawn to the struggle for independence. While the history books rarely mention it, a number of women in various countries strongly supported political parties that were calling for anti-colonial resistance, even though some other parties were backed by the colonial administration because they were led by African moderates who were hoping for their lives to improve in exchange for their loyalty to the colonizers.

Realizing that the march towards independence was inevitable and fearing their colonial possessions would be taken over by the Communist bloc once power had been transferred to the Africans, the colonial capitals sought to control the transition to independence. They also made sure to organize their relations with the future independent states by creating “cooperation” (or “association” in the case of the British colonies) arrangements and by training African political leaders to base their governments and institutions on European models – starting with democracy endorsed by elections. Elections were becoming a critical issue and the nationalist leaders, eager to succeed the colonial powers, felt that there was an urgent need to create mass parties to underpin their legitimacy. Activists of all stripes worked tirelessly to convince people of the importance of voting for the future of their country. When the right to vote was extended to women, some politicians began to carve out a small space for their women activists in a bid to rally the female vote, but they were few in number, since most African politicians argued that the priority was economic and social issues, not women’s issues.

Nevertheless, in this ideological-political competition, the political parties and trade unions still sought to enlist the support of women or women’s groups, sometimes encouraging – as part of their electoral strategy – the creation of women’s branches of their movements in the shape of support committees or women’s unions affiliated to the party. This was the case in the French

colonies, with the approach adopted by the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* [African Democratic Rally] (RDA), which was the very first pan-African nationalist party, established in October 1946 in Bamako and led by Félix Houphouët Boigny, a doctor and planter. The RDA developed a platform for joint action through its local sections representing the various territories and so could speak with one voice against the colonial power. In addition, by targeting women and the masses, the party was the biggest winner of the 1956 elections, which swept to power the future leaders of the former French colonies.

Unlike the British territories, and with a few exceptions, very few elite women in the French colonies initially signed up voluntarily for the struggle. Considered to be *advanced natives* (i.e. influenced by Western culture), this minority of women, known as *intellectuals* in the popular parlance, were thinking more of modernism than of attending meetings, not least because activism could be extremely dangerous, given that any challenge to the colonial order would be repressed severely.

Those women had been educated and enjoyed privileged lives compared to the rest of the population; they worked in modern, socially recognized professions as midwives, nurses, teachers, office workers, etc., which gave them a measure of intellectual and financial independence. More attracted to European ways of thinking, they were keen to rid themselves gradually of the weight of tradition that, in their opinion, was keeping women down. In addition, as they wished to keep their status as civil servants or their employment that depended on the colonial authorities – a status which meant that they were not harassed as their countrymen were – they preferred to stay away from the demonstrations and to avoid taking any risks.

Women battling for independence

Conversely, a number of illiterate and working class women defied their husbands' refusal to allow them to become involved in politics and threw themselves with enthusiasm and conviction into the anti-colonial resistance

movement. In Mali, for example, they played an important role in the election of separatist leaders, relaying their slogans in traditional settings, persuading rural and urban women to go out and vote or make a contribution towards funding the election campaigns, and taking part in marches in support of the *Sudanese Union* affiliated to the African Democratic Rally. During the famous *Women's March on Grand-Bassam* in Côte d'Ivoire in December 1949, women of all ages swept towards the former colonial capital, some 40 kilometres from Abidjan, to demand the release of their husbands, brothers and sons – nationalist activists imprisoned for more than one year by the French authorities under pretext of subversion. Beaten by militiamen and pushed back by water cannon, they are regarded in history to this day as the protagonists of the first major anti-colonial movement by women in West Africa.

In Guinea, too, women were the most ardent supporters of the young *Democratic Party of Guinea* and of its leader Ahmed Sékou Touré, the man who said “No” to General de Gaulle in 1958 when he was hoping to consolidate his African colonies into a *French Community* controlled from Paris. One of Sékou Touré's key promises concerned the empowerment of women because, as he put it, “*the inferior status of women was a legacy of colonialism*”; consequently, “*the nation would be built with the involvement of women, who were the leaven of the Guinean Revolution*”. It was even said at the time that, even in the remotest villages, it was Guinea's women who dragged their husbands into the political arena, and they never missed a meeting of their chosen party when the leading lights were in attendance.

Nor would they be found wanting when it came to taking part in meetings, supporting strikes called by trade unions and defying the repression of the colonial militia, even if it meant going to prison. Indeed, stories still abound of the passionate political commitment of Guinea's women, as highlighted in Sékou Touré's speech: “*Women must encourage their husbands to join the RDA. If they do not want to, the women can simply refuse themselves to their husbands; the next day they will be obliged to join the RDA.*”

To this day, the country still celebrates the memory of **Mbalia Camara** (1929-1955), a tragic heroine who, while pregnant and almost about to give birth, was stabbed with a sabre on 9 February 1955 by a local governor in the pay of the colonial administration. Mbalia Camara chaired the first women's committee of the PDG/RDA in Tondon, a village in the north-east of the country. She led a protest against the repression of activists of the Democratic Party of Guinea after a fight with an opposing party supported by the administration.

Her stomach ripped open, the young woman was taken to hospital in Conakry, where she gave birth to a stillborn child on 11 February and died from her wounds on 18 February. The tragedy unleashed strong emotions in the country, where 10,000 people attended her funeral. The colonial justice system acquitted her murderer, even though he had stabbed some fifteen people.

The pursuit of the nationalists sometimes took a more dramatic turn, both in terms of scale and brutality. This was the case with the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, launched in the early 1950s by some Kikuyu farmers who were outraged when their best lands were expropriated by the British. Preceded by a climate of intense violence and insecurity, the insurrection against the white farmers also involved numerous women, who helped by informing and supporting the insurgents. The rebellion left some 15,000 people dead and led to the ten-year imprisonment of the nationalist leader, Jomo Kenyatta.

In Madagascar, too, the French expeditionary corps, reinforced by Senegalese riflemen and Malagasy auxiliaries, quelled a separatist uprising in March 1947. The conflict lasted 21 months and left a terrible toll of 89,000 people dead, including women and children who succumbed as a result of the fighting or famine. Executions, torture and torched villages – the usual machinery of repression was used relentlessly, leaving the Malagasy population drained and traumatized by that reign of terror. In reprisal, atrocities were committed against the white settlers on the island, resulting in some 550 victims.



Fig. 11. Portrait of Gisèle Rabesahala photographed in the 1970s.

© Rabesahala photographic collection

One of the great female witnesses of this tragic event was the activist **Gisèle Rabesahala** (1929–2011) who, at the age of 17, joined the struggle for her country's independence. Born to a prominent family of Antananarivo, the girl had just obtained her school leaving certificate. Among her peers were a number of young students whose communist ideology inspired her. During the bloody repression that left the island bereaved, she helped to set up a *Madagascar Solidarity Committee* to come to the aid of victims of political repression and, despite the risks, she provided secretarial assistance to the two Parisian lawyers who had come to defend the Malagasy activists who were being prosecuted by the

French State. Some defendants, including two Malagasy deputies, were even sentenced to death, only to be pardoned in 1957, when the French National Assembly, then faced with an anti-colonialist international environment, amnestied political prisoners. Others were not so lucky, for they had been executed shortly after their conviction in the immediate aftermath of the events.

The tireless efforts of Gisèle Rabesahala – who had been made secretary-general of the Solidarity Committee – to obtain an amnesty for thousands of prisoners, are often remembered as exemplary. She fired off numerous articles to the press and brought the international media's attention to the iniquity of the colonial trial procedure and the plight of those who had been convicted. She persuaded people to sign petitions to Vincent Auriol, the President of the French Republic, to whom they were submitted through leftist French deputies. Playing on national solidarity, she set up sections of her Solidarity Committee throughout the country in a bid to help the convicts' families, who were suffering some considerable hardship.

In 1956, Gisèle Rabesahala launched her own party, the *Union of the Malagasy People*, and in the first direct elections held in the overseas territories that same year, she was elected to the City Council of Antananarivo, along with

some of her supporters. Two years later, she was appointed Secretary-General of the *Congress Party for the Independence of Madagascar* (AKFM) – a front comprising five independence movements. She travelled to many countries to bear witness to the memory of the nationalist insurgents and continued her work until independence was achieved in 1960. Between 1977 and 1989, she was the first female minister in Madagascar, with responsibility for revolutionary arts and culture. She never ceased to fight to improve living conditions for the underprivileged of her country and this image of the young Malagasy who dared to challenge colonial power in 1947 has made her a true heroine.



Fig. 12. Aoua Keita.
© Sylvia Serbin

The repressive policy towards the nationalists did not deter the Malian **Aoua Keita** (1912-1980), a midwife by profession. Owing to her tireless activism, in the face of disciplinary measures including the threat of transfer and other sanctions, she became in 1958, the first woman in Africa to be elected to parliament. The daughter of a veteran of the First World War in France, Aoua Keita belonged to the first generation of girls to be educated in Mali (then French Sudan). In 1931, she graduated from medical school in Dakar and was part of the first cohort of midwives trained under colonization.

From her earliest postings to dispensaries in the bush, Aoua Keita fought for a better life for women and for the children whom she brought into the world and saved hundreds of lives by providing medical treatment and preventive health care in the villages where she worked.

Outraged by the injustice that the colonists inflicted upon Africans, she joined the Sudanese section of the RDA in 1946 and travelled throughout the country to persuade women to vote and support the RDA's struggle for independence, despite the hostility of their husbands, who were not prepared to have their wives distracted from their domestic chores by politics. Her prolonged

dedication to consciousness-raising has made her a symbol of female activism. When working in Gao in 1951, she played an active role in organizing the elections scheduled to take place in the French colonies.

On the eve of the election, all civil servants in the region who had been identified as RDA activists were transferred by the administration. Overlooked in the purge, Aoua Keita rushed between polling stations to ensure that the election was conducted properly, thus ensuring the success of the RDA in the polls. She did not escape a subsequent disciplinary transfer. Initially sent to Senegal, and then to various small towns in Mali, she nonetheless established a women's inter-union movement, which she represented at the 1957 inaugural congress of the *General Workers' Union of Black Africa* (UGTAN). In 1958, she was the only woman to be elected to the Political Bureau of the Sudanese Union of the RDA. That year, too, following the referendum of 28 September, she became a member of the Constitutional Committee of the future Republic of Mali. She was then elected to parliament and played a prominent political role in the early years of her country's independence. That remarkable journey was not enough to save Aoua Keita from being deserted by her husband because she could not bear children.

Another key figure of female activism is the Nigerian **Funmilayo Frances Beere Anikulapo Kuti** (1900-1978). Born into a prominent Christian family in Abeokuta, Funmilayo attended school and the Anglican grammar school in her hometown before crossing the seas, in 1929, to continue her studies in England, where she moved in anti-colonial and socialist circles. On her return, she rejected her European name, "Frances", and kept only her Yoruba names. Appointed to the girls' school in Abeokuta, she became the first Nigerian woman to be a school principal.

Having devoted a few years to her home life – she was married to the Reverend Ransome Kuti, with whom she had three sons – Funmilayo Kuti decided, in 1942, that *women in dresses*, i.e. the local middle class women, should make their expertise available to the *women in loincloths*, i.e. the masses. She therefore brought middle-classes educated women together to organize social activities in a small association called *The Abeokuta Ladies' Club*. By talking

to the small vendors around her, she began to learn about their world and was shocked to learn of the economic hardship that they faced on account of duties levied on their wares and the produce requisitioned from their stock in furtherance of the war effort. From then on, her ambitions focused on securing equal rights and literacy for those women, so that they could defend their interests.



Fig. 13. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti on her 70th birthday (24 October 1970). © Ransome-Kuti photographic collection

Funmilayo Kuti organized evening classes for the market women and rallied the *Ladies' Club* to support the rice sellers, whose stock had been requisitioned by the colonizers. She then turned her association into the *Abeokuta Women's Union*, which had over 20,000 members. From then on she continued to fight to draw attention to the injustices suffered by female workers in Nigeria, as in 1946, when she led a historic campaign to denounce the corruption of a tribal chief who was responsible for collecting taxes and food on behalf of the British administration. Abusing his status, he ratcheted up requisitions of rice, chicken, yams and *gari* and siphoned off the surplus for himself. To cries of “*No taxation*

without representation”, thousands of women demonstrated for several days outside the chief's home, demanding to be represented on the council of tribal chiefs – as they had been before colonization – in order to have a greater say.

Following numerous sit-ins and petitions, the press was called in and the women eventually refused to pay the tax. Funmilayo was imprisoned but, on her release, she set sail again for London to tell the British public about the conditions endured by Nigerian women under British rule. She went to the trade unions and the government, and her claims were taken up repeatedly in the press. She was even received by the Mayor of Manchester to discuss the status of women in her country. The standoff lasted for three years until the unrest finally bore fruit: the women obliged the chief to abdicate and the tax was abolished. They even secured four seats on the new *Interim Council*

that had been established in the city, including one for Funmilayo Kuti, who transformed her association into *The Nigerian Women's Union* (NWU), which had greater mobilization capacity.

In 1953, Funmilayo Kuti was the only female member of the Nigerian delegation to the Constitutional Conference in London, tasked with negotiating the country's independence, which would be achieved in 1960. She also founded the *Federation of Nigerian women*, developed links with other international women's organizations and travelled to the Soviet Union and China, after which the colonial authorities and the conservative parties suspected her of communism.

A tireless activist for women's suffrage, Funmilayo Kuti was involved in politics for a time, as a member of the *National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons* (NCNC). She was hoping to achieve a shift in the political mentality in favour of women, but she found herself sidelined and, disappointed, decided not to continue. On 18 February 1977, aged 77, the woman nicknamed the *mother of women's rights* was defenestrated by some soldiers during an attack on her family home, which was also home to her son Fela, a singer of international renown who was considered to be a trouble-maker by the military regime of the time. She never recovered from her injuries and died on 13 April 1978.

After independence: societal claims and armed struggle

The offensive against colonialism was bolstered in the 1950s, when Africans no longer stood alone in defending their aspirations. The United Nations had become a sounding board for denouncing colonial violence, and support had been expressed by Arab and Asian countries that had regained their sovereignty and had held a major event, the Bandung Conference, in Indonesia, which became independent in 1949 after four years of armed conflict against the former Dutch ruler. From 18 to 24 April 1955, 29 Third World States and several liberation movements attended the first *Conference of Non-Aligned States*, which strenuously denounced colonialism and Western racism.

Not wishing to be outdone, the African intelligentsia who had emigrated to Europe also promised the support of the world of culture in two meetings of the *International Congress of Black Writers and Artists*, organized by the Senegalese Alioune Diop (1910-1980). Diop was a man of culture who founded, together with his wife Christiane Yandé-Diop, *Présence Africaine* – a prestigious literary magazine and Parisian publishing house, launched in 1947. The first congress was held at the Sorbonne in Paris from 19 to 22 September 1956, and the second in Rome from 26 March to 1 April 1959. The most significant event, however, was Ghana's achievement of independence on 6 March 1957, making it the first sub-Saharan country in Africa to win such a victory. Taking advantage of the positive atmosphere, President Kwame Nkrumah decided to organize the *Conference of Independent African States* in Accra on 15 April 1958 – it was the first pan-African meeting held on the continent.

The Pan-African Women's Organization

Lastly, in 1960, as brand new flags began to unfurl proudly over parts of the African continent, 18 new States, including 14 from the French colonial empire, joined the United Nations. The pan-Africanist dream of the liberation of Africa was coming true, but another of goal, unity, was yet to be achieved. The young states, busy with nation building and delivering on the development promises made to the masses, threw themselves enthusiastically into setting up bodies and organizations to coordinate their political, economic and cultural synergies. Their desire for unity came to fruition in Addis Ababa in May 1963, when the **Organization of African Unity (OAU)**, whose charter was founded on the philosophy of Pan-Africanism, was established.

That said, African women who had participated in the anti-colonial struggle, helped to liberate their countries and supported the election of the leaders of an independent Africa had, however, established the **Union of African Women** in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 31 July 1962 – one year before the birth of the OAU. They had no intention of standing on the sidelines of the nation-building process. Political activism had brought them into contact

with each other across their respective borders; they had established links, discussed their problems, shared their experiences and learnt new ideas and skills.

In coming together through their organizations, African women sought to build a forum for solidarity and mobilization that would lend greater weight to their voice, not only in their own countries, but also on the international scene. Their aim was to ensure that new government policies took on board their expectations for girls' education and female literacy, regulating early marriage and requiring the woman's consent, provision of health infrastructure, the right to vote, the adoption of family legislation to ensure greater respect for women's rights, legal protection for women, better conditions for rural women, access to land, progress on customary rights and, lastly, women's involvement in public governance.

The prime movers of that initiative were three seasoned activists, namely Aoua Keita from Mali, Jeanne Martin Cissé from Guinea and Pauline Clark from Ghana, who did their level best to persuade as many of the continent's associations as possible to endorse the unity project. With the support of some Heads of State who were concerned about the status of women, such as Sékou Touré from Guinea, Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Modibo Keita from Mali and Julius Nyerere from Tanzania, they set off in July 1961 to canvass women's groups in Senegal, Togo, Dahomey (Benin) and Niger and to inform them about the federation project.

The first consultation, held in Conakry, was attended by those mentioned above and by representatives from Niger, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. At the meeting it was also decided to invite women's organizations from Central and East Africa, and, in particular, to involve activists from national liberation movements whose countries were still struggling for independence. At the invitation of the *Union of Tunisian Women*, the preparatory committee for the future *Pan-African Women's Organization* was received some time later by President Bourguiba and his wife, who encouraged their initiative.

That same year, while travelling in Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania), Jeanne Martin Cissé met Julius Nyerere, the future president of the British colony, which was achieving its independence. He assured her that as soon as that was done, he would be happy to host the organization's inaugural conference, and that he would persuade his peers in the subregion to send their women's groups. Galvanized by such support, Jeanne Martin Cissé and her comrades continued their mobilization campaign in Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, CAR and Chad, whose Heads of State and local associations were most welcoming. A founding committee meeting was held to ratify the project in Bamako from 8 to 10 June 1962, and attracted representatives from ten countries – Angola, Cameroon, Dahomey, Ghana, Guinea, Portuguese Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Tunisia. Almost a victory! Accordingly, from 27 to 31 July 1962, Dar es Salaam hosted the first lively meeting of women from almost every part of the continent. Fourteen States – the Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanganyika, Togo and Tunisia – sent delegations.

A dozen or so resistance organizations were also represented, as a reminder that the women in their countries were also at war: the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) of South Africa, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) of Mozambique, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FNL), the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and the Zanzibar National Party (ZNP) and the Afro-Shirazi Party from Zanzibar. Three European delegations the Belgian Women's Organization and the Women's Committees of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Germany attended.

It is important to remember that African women were often invited by Western women's organizations, generally those with links to Eastern European countries or the Communist Party, to discuss the struggle for women's rights in their own countries. Through those international platforms they meet other activists from colonized countries and developed countries and learnt about the strategies adopted in various parts of the world to secure women's empowerment.

At its Dar es Salaam conference, the new organization – now known as the *Union of African Women* – proclaimed an *African Women's Day*, to be celebrated on 31 July of each year in all its member countries. Jeanne Martin Cissé became its first Secretary-General and held that office for twelve years. Four countries have to date hosted the headquarters of the organization: Mali from 1962 to 1968; Algeria from 1968 to 1986; Angola until 2008; and, since then, Pretoria in South Africa, where it is currently headed by Ms Assetou Koité its present-day Secretary General.

At its Dakar congress in 1974, the *Union of African Women* was renamed the ***Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO)***. Since then, African women have been involved in all the major women's events worldwide, from the first *World Conference on Women* held by the United Nations in Mexico City in 1975, which reaffirmed the principle of equality between men and women called for the elimination of gender-based discrimination, to the 1985 Nairobi Conference convened to mark the close of the United Nations Decade for Women under watchword *better consideration of women in development strategies*. There was also a meeting in Beijing, China, in 1995, calling for greater representation of women in government, and the Millennium Development Summit in September 2000, which called for greater autonomy for women in poverty reduction.

African women on the international stage

However, as the new States entered the international arena, very few of them were prepared to give women the highly diplomatic role of representing them in the comity of nations. The pioneering States here were Liberia and Guinea, which propelled two women to senior positions at the United Nations: Angie Elisabeth Brooks and Jeanne Martin Cissé.

Jeanne Martin Cissé (born 1926) – a teacher who graduated from the teacher-training college in Rufisque, Senegal, in 1944, and militant nationalist close to President Sékou Touré – had a trailblazing career. In 1972, she was appointed Guinea's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, where she chaired the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid. She was the first woman to chair the United Nations Security Council when her country became a non-permanent member of the Security Council from 1972 to 1973. Subsequently serving as her country's Minister of Social Affairs from 1976 to 1984, she was also the only woman to be admitted to the Political Bureau of the Guinean Democratic Party. Imprisoned during the military coup that followed the death of Sékou Touré, she returned on her release to the United States of America, where she continued to fight for the emancipation of African women.

In 1969, the Liberian **Angie Elisabeth Brooks** (1928-2007) was elected President of the General Assembly at the 24th session and was the first woman to project the image of the African continent in the international community. Her election was an achievement for the United Nations, which, since its establishment in 1945, has only appointed three women to the prestigious post. As early as 1954, Angie Elisabeth Brooks was the first woman to be appointed permanent representative of an African country to the United Nations. It was thanks to this high-profile role that she was elected, 15 years later, to preside over that prestigious assembly.

Born into a poor family of nine children, Angie Elisabeth Brooks, whose father was a Methodist preacher, was placed with a tutor in order to continue her education, which proved to be excellent. Her brilliant results gave her the opportunity to pursue graduate studies at an American university, but she could not afford to travel there. She decided to write to the Liberian President, William Tubman, to ask for a scholarship, but her letters went unanswered. Having learnt that he took regular morning walks, she decided to interrupt him and managed to plead her case – successfully. In 1949, she obtained a Bachelor of Social Science degree from Shaw University in North Carolina, followed, in 1952, by a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin. To supplement her meagre grant, she performed odd jobs, including washing dishes in a restaurant, and working as a laundress and a child-minder. In 1953, she undertook graduate studies in international law at the prestigious University College London. She then returned to her homeland where she became a Counsellor-at-law to the Supreme Court and Assistant Attorney General, while teaching law part-time at the University of Liberia.

As a result of her high-profile work, in 1954 she was appointed to the delegation of Liberia to the United Nations. Two years later, she became Vice-Chair of the United Nations' Fourth Committee with responsibility for colonial and dependent territories. Despite those responsibilities, she pursued her studies and was awarded a doctorate in law in 1962 by Shaw University and a further diploma from Howard University in 1967. After a remarkable United Nations career during which she chaired major committees, this divorced mother of two boys, who had adopted some twenty children, was Deputy Secretary of State and Justice of the Supreme Court in Monrovia. She died in Houston, Texas, in 2007.

Women in the armed struggle

While some countries were indulging in the joys of independence – although their dreams of national unity were increasingly overshadowed by the threat of sedition and coups d'état – other Africans were still suffering and dying in bomb attacks perpetrated by their colonizers, who refused point-blank to

restore freedom to black people. Nationalist movements in those territories, which some European countries regarded as “land for settlement”, launched a clandestine struggle for national liberation in 1961. The conflict basically took two forms: wars of independence, as in Portuguese colonies such as Angola, where the armed struggle began in 1961, Guinea-Bissau (1962) and Mozambique (1963) and in former British colonies such as Namibia, which was fighting with South Africa (1965); and civil wars such as those in apartheid areas such as South Africa (1962) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

In those armed struggles, women, too, made the ultimate sacrifice to liberate their country, but those acts of female bravery have evidently slipped from the collective memory, which only attributes such – albeit collective – action to men. Various books, research articles, documentaries, educational programmes, poems and even songs have immortalized beyond national borders the names of charismatic anti-colonial leaders such as Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973), Agostinho Neto (1922-1979) and Samora Machel (1933-1986), who were the leaders of the liberation wars in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique.

However, it is worth looking again at the legacy of all women who enlisted in the armed struggle to regain their independence alongside their comrades. The international media, which kept a daily count of the death toll from these tragic wars, never reported that some of the commandos fighting for the liberation armies were women. The war had emancipated them suddenly and brutally as it rallied them to the cause of national freedom but – regardless of whether their names were known – they sacrificed as much as their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, without enjoying the same level of recognition in return. The temporary tributes to the “luckiest” of them – a statue here, an eponymous school or street there or a commemoration lacking any real solemnity on Women’s Day – are not enough to guarantee them their place in posterity and pass on the memory of their heroic sacrifice to the younger generations.

History books make little or no mention of the female activists who, alongside men, engaged in armed resistance; women such as **Ernestina Silà**, nicknamed Titina (1943-1973) – a heroine in Guinea Bissau, who joined the guerrillas at the age of eighteen and was political commissar of the *African*

Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), established in 1956 by Amílcar Cabral. She was barely 30 years old when she was killed in a Portuguese ambush on 30 January 1973, a week after Cabral had been assassinated in Conakry.

Yet when independence came, some of these meddling women still managed – although promotion of women was not really on the agenda – to overcome the difficulties involved and fight their way into politics.

This was the case of **Carmen Pereira** (1937-), a resistance fighter in the PAIGC, which she joined in 1962. Her political activism did not keep her from studying medicine in the Soviet Union before returning to battle and becoming the only female member of the *Executive Committee of the Struggle*, a body comprising party strategists. After elections had been held in areas under guerrilla control in 1973, Carmen Pereira was appointed President of the National People's Congress, and held that office for ten years after the proclamation of independence in September 1973. To facilitate regime change, she even acted briefly, for three days, as Acting Head of State (14-16 May 1984), before being appointed to several ministerial posts.

Also worthy of mention are **Francisca Pereira Gomes**, another prominent PAIGC figure who had a ministerial career after the war, and **Alda do Espírito Santo** (1926-2010), a writer and politician born in the archipelago of São Tomé and Príncipe, who, after the war in 1975, was Minister of Information and Minister of Culture, holding two parliamentary mandates from 1980 to 1991, and then President of the National Assembly. From a middle class background – her mother was a schoolteacher and her father a civil servant with the post office – she studied at university in Portugal, where she crossed paths with other nationalist students from various Portuguese colonies, including Amílcar Cabral, Mario Pinto de Andrade, Agostinho Neto and Marcelino dos Santos. When she could no longer afford to stay in Portugal – but also because she knew she was under surveillance as a political activist – she interrupted her studies and returned to teach in São Tomé, where she became involved in the resistance. **Alda do Espírito Santo** used her poetry as an activist weapon to translate the aspirations of her colonized people, and was the first female African writer in the Portuguese language.

Moreover, while countries such as Angola, Ghana and South Africa keep the memory of their heroines alive, others consign them to relative oblivion. This puts the historian in a difficult position in which highlighting the best-known figures might lead to sidelining others who are equally deserving of public recognition. Most commendable is the example set by Angola, which not only continues to honour its famous Queen Nzinga Mbandi, but has also raised an imposing monument to women on a busy roundabout in Luanda. Known as the *Angolan Heroines Monument*, it is a tribute to five fighters who epitomize the selfless courage of all the women who participated in the wars of liberation.

Deolinda Rodrigues de Almeida (1939-1967), an intellectual and activist in the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), was a member of a guerrilla column that was executed on 2 March 1967, after being horrifically tortured in a Congo Kinshasa army camp controlled by the Union of Peoples of Angola (UPA), a faction of the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), which was one of three rival nationalist guerrilla movements. The group had been captured after straying unwarily into an area controlled by its opponents. Four other young women, **Irene Cohen de Brito Teixeira** (1939-1967), **Engracia dos Santos** (1947-1967), **Teresa Afonso** (1946-1967) and **Lucrecia Paim** (1939-1967), were with Deolinda. Committed to the struggle against Portuguese colonialism, they were collateral victims of the internecine strife that undermined the unity of the colonial resistance movement. Engracia, Lucrecia and Teresa were peasant civilians fleeing the war with their families when they decided to join the resistance. They became members of the *Organization of Angolan Women*, the MPLA's women's section, established in 1961 and chaired at the time by Irene Cohen.

Irene had attended the high school in Luanda, but could not complete her secondary education owing to the lack of funds. In order to provide for her family, she took an office job with the colonial administration in 1958, but she soon joined a group of young intellectuals and underground activists in Luanda. In 1964, she travelled to Portugal and then to Paris – on a forged passport – to meet overseas Angolan resistance activists and young French Communists and raise their awareness of the struggle in her country. In March 1966, she represented her country's youth at the Eighth Congress of the Young Communist League, held in Bucharest, Romania, and travelled

afterwards to Brazzaville, which hosted the MPLA Executive Committee, chaired by Agostinho Neto, and worked as the organization's secretary. She also underwent military training to be fit for combat.

Deolinda Rodrigues doubtless stands out in this small group of young women on account of her personal experience: she had kept a diary chronicling her daily progress through the war and had published some moving poems; she had also turned down the opportunity to live in exile in the United States of America, where she had been studying on a scholarship from the Methodist Church, preferring to return to the call to arms.

Winnie Mandela – Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela –, another iconic figure in the fight against apartheid was born in 1936 in the village of Bizana in the Cape Province of South Africa. She initially trained as a social worker and subsequently obtained a degree in international relations at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

She began her professional career in the administration of the Transkei bantoustan before settling definitively in Johannesburg, where she was the first black social worker employed at the Baragwanath hospital. Professionally very conscientious, her work in the field soon made her aware of the deplorable living conditions of her patients.

She met the lawyer Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC, in the 1950s. They married in June 1958. That was when she settled in Soweto (South West Township), where her husband resided. During his incarceration (1962-1990), she was confined to residence in Brandfort in the Orange Free State. During all those years, Winnie Mandela committed herself to fighting against apartheid until its very end and, alone, brought up their two daughters who were sent to boarding school in Swaziland.

Under surveillance by the government of South Africa, she was arrested and incarcerated for a year in a high-security prison where she was tortured. Once released, she continued her political activities and was imprisoned again on several occasions. In 1985, her house was set fire to, but Winnie continued

her struggle after her return to Soweto. Her militant action earned her the nickname “Mother of the Nation”.

She was involved in a variety of social activities including the creation of the Mandela United Football Club. Her reputation as a militant was somewhat tarnished by the Club members’ connection with the murder in 1989 of a 14-year-old boy Stompie Moeketsi. Her political career then underwent a certain decline and she divorced in 1996.

In spite of this regrettable turn of events, she was elected president of the ANC Women’s League. After Nelson Mandela was elected to the presidency in 1994, she was appointed vice-minister for the Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. In 1999, when the ANC leadership distanced itself, she was re-elected to parliament but resigned in 2003 after accusations of fraud which were dismissed on appeal.

As a woman with a very strong personality, adulated for the part she played in the fall of the apartheid regime, her history has been the subject of operas, books and films.

The various feminine profiles referred to above should not however detract from the considerable number of women, from South Africa to Zimbabwe, through Namibia, Mozambique and other territories traumatized by colonial apartheid, which took a united stand with strength and courage against the challenges of history.

An artist against apartheid

In South Africa, **Miriam Makeba (1932-2008)**, a singer, drew on her talents in making her stand against the tyranny of a racist regime. The first African singer to become an international celebrity in the 1960s, she was banned from her country because of her anti-apartheid activism, but the outside world learnt from her songs about the tragedy experienced by black South African victims of apartheid. Born to a father who was a teacher and a mother who

was a maid to a white family, the young Zenzi grew up in a township near Johannesburg. Her lyrics conveyed the violence there by which she was first affected only a few days after birth, when her mother was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for selling bootleg beer.

She was educated at a Methodist school where she studied music and she sang so beautifully that she became a member of the school choir. She even had the honour of singing solo during a welcome ceremony for King George VI when he visited South Africa. As a teenager, Zenzi worked alongside her mother as a servant to the whites, and she gave birth at age 17 to her first daughter, whose father died two years later. To make a living, she began singing at weddings and celebrations and soon joined a group of professional jazz and pop musicians in which she became the lead singer.

The group gave concerts in neighbouring countries and, in 1956, Miriam became an international star when "Pata Pata", her most famous song was released. Although she often sang in her native tongue, her international audience was moved by her intonations, which conveyed the despair expressed in her lyrics. In 1960, after touring the United States of America and Europe, she was banned from her country on account of statements that she had made about black people's living conditions there.

There then followed 31 years of exile, during which she travelled round the world before settling in Guinea at the invitation of President Sékou Touré. Miriam Makeba's struggle even took her to the podium of the United Nations, where she denounced the scandal of apartheid. In 1966, she became the first African woman to be awarded a Grammy, for an album recorded with Harry Belafonte, the famous African American singer. During her American tours, Miriam Makeba rubbed shoulders with the major stars of the time, from Marilyn Monroe to Duke Ellington. At the end of her long exile, she returned to her country in 1991, after the release of Nelson Mandela. In 1995 she established a charitable foundation in Johannesburg to help women and girls who fell victim to the violence that plagues South Africa to this day. On 9 November 2008, she collapsed on stage in Italy, near Naples, struck down by a heart attack after singing one last song. An artistic death worthy of the symbol known as *Mama Africa*.

Challenges for the new generation of African women

Long before pan-Africanists called on black people to take a stand against white domination, there had been heroic episodes of resistance in Africa, in which women had often played leading roles. However, women of recent generations have built on the lessons learnt from Pan-Africanism to take part in the anti-colonial, anti-racist struggle and stake their claims for a better status in society.

Through their associations, they have joined forces beyond the borders of their respective countries to influence policies for the development of independent Africa and to voice their hopes for their society to be more open to the emancipation and empowerment of women. Although the situation is still uneven from one country to another, African women's mobilization and initiatives have given them international standing and have raised their profile in many national and international decision-making bodies. They have put so much energy into changing mentalities and customs that sometimes stifle women's freedom! As citizens and economic and social stakeholders, these women are committed to democracy, education, health and a better distribution of national resources. They have also been taken part in political struggles against dictatorships and oppressive systems and they have made leaders acknowledge women's economic and social importance.

Access to power

In January 2006, at the age of 67, the Liberian **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf** caused a media stir when she became the first African female Head of State. In addition to a doctorate in Economics from Harvard University, she has to her credit a high-level career in international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and in Citibank, one of the largest banks in the United States of America, of which she was vice-president. Married at the age of 17, she nevertheless completed her higher education, raised four sons, pursued a successful career and overcame

a divorce. In her country, where women have had the right to vote since 1946, her election was seen as the culmination of three decades of political commitment, during which she had been imprisoned and exiled after narrowly escaping the firing squad during the former military dictatorship. She was her country's first female Secretary of State (1972-1973) and Minister of Finance (1980-1985). Currently in her second term, the woman affectionately called the *Iron Lady* has restored hope to a country sapped by 14 years of civil war but nonetheless blessed with a wealth of rubber, diamond, iron and forestry resources and thus with a promising future.

By showing that an African woman can run her country capably, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf stands as a role model and has paved the way for one of her contemporaries, **Joyce Banda**, President of Malawi since April 2012 and founder of Malawi's National Association of Business Women. Ms Banda was Minister for Gender and Children's Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs before becoming Vice-President of Malawi. Since her first term in office she has concentrated on women's empowerment and girls' education. More recently, **Catherine Samba-Panza**, former mayor of Bangui, acceded in 2014 to the position of interim Head of State of the Central African Republic. As a businesswoman fighting for gender equality, she was elected in order to bring peace back to her crisis-ridden country.

Most noteworthy is Rwanda which, after genocide and a tragic civil war, distinguished itself in 2008 by electing, for the first time in the world, a majority of women to parliament, some 51 female members of parliament. Rwandan women, who currently hold 63.8% of the seats in the Rwandan parliament, have been followed by other combative women who hold more than 40% of the parliamentary seats in Senegal and South Africa, and more than 35% in Mozambique, Angola and Tanzania.

Also to be noted are those trail-blazing women who acceded to the rank of Prime Minister, sometimes with disastrous consequences: the Central-African **Elisabeth Domitien**, who, in 1975, became the first woman in Africa to be elected prime minister, but was imprisoned 15 months later for opposing President Bokassa; the economist **Sylvie Kinigi**, who was appointed Head

of the Government of Burundi in 1992 and acting President of the Republic from 1993 to 1994; the Rwandan **Agathe Uwilingiyimana**, a chemist by training, appointed in 1993 and murdered in the genocide; **Mame Madior Boye**, a former judge who was appointed Prime Minister in Senegal in 2002; **Maria das Neves Ceita Baptista de Sousa**, an economist of São Tomé and Príncipe, appointed in 2002; the Mozambican economist **Luísa Dias Diogo**, who was appointed in 2004 and served the longest term of office (2010). She continued her career at the World Bank before joining an international network of women leaders striving for greater fairness equitable to secure women's development.

There was also **Maria do Carmo Silveira**, an economist and former Governor of the Central Bank of São Tomé and Príncipe, appointed Prime Minister in 2005; the lawyer and President of the Senate, **Rose Francine Rogombe**, who, in 2009, served for five months as Deputy Prime Minister of Gabon; and lastly **Ruth Perry** of Liberia, who also served for one year as interim Chairwoman of the Council of State in 1996. The youngest woman Prime Minister was Senegal's **Aminata Touré**, who was appointed in 2013. A former Minister of Justice, she also worked for nine years at the United Nations Population Fund, where she was Chief of the Human Rights section. She holds a doctorate in international financial management and was educated in France and the United States of America.

The emergence of a new women's leadership

It is no longer surprising that more and more women now hold ministerial, diplomatic or entrepreneurial posts in Africa. Some have even excelled in unexpected areas – **Wangari Muta Maathai** (1940-2011), the academic and animal biology professor, an icon who burnished the image of African women when, in 2004, she won the Nobel Peace Prize for her 30-year struggle for the emancipation of women, sustainable development and democracy, is an outstanding example. One can but be impressed by the destiny of this young Kikuyu from a family of poor Mount Kenya farmers – a destiny that has won her such remarkable international recognition. A brilliant student, she won a

scholarship to study biology at an American university and completed doctoral studies in Germany before becoming a professor of veterinary anatomy at the University of Nairobi. In 1971, she became the first African woman to obtain a doctorate and, five years later, she was the first woman in her country to hold a university Chair. Under the *Green Belt Movement*, which she started in 1977, many parts of Kenya were reforested and more than 30 million trees were planted near villages, farmland and schools. It is a major environmental project under which thousands of jobs were created for rural women, who formed associations to manage 5,000 nurseries. Wangari's goal was to encourage the villagers to combat deforestation and produce sustainable energy.

At first, some people did not take this academic's plans seriously, as local traditions would be upset by focusing on women's action, but she was highly persuasive, canvassing women and persuading them to combat the seemingly inevitable by engaging in productive work that yielded many benefits. Owing to the early successes scored, the initiative was emulated in other parts of the world and, in 1986, the *Green Belt Movement* was extended into a pan-African network.

While raising her three children, Wangari Maathai was also active in establishing the *National Council of Women of Kenya* and became its President in 1981. Her husband, who had little taste for such activism, filed for divorce. Wangari then decided to take up politics. When, in 1989, the government tried to bulldoze a park in the capital to build the headquarters of the ruling party, Wangari took the lead in challenging the project and was backed by supporters who took turns to demonstrate day and night in a *Freedom Corner* in the centre of the park. They were soon joined by a movement comprising the mothers and sisters of political prisoners on hunger strike. This protest earned her the wrath of the ruling authorities. She was beaten by the police and imprisoned, but the construction project had to be shelved.

Ten years later, she was subjected to further police violence for denouncing illegal attempts to clear Kenya's forest for use by developers. Once again, the scale of the opposition forced the authorities to reconsider. Wangari Maathai became a true icon who advocated human rights, social justice and

environmental conservation in international bodies. In 1997, she even decided to stand to be elected president and, far from being discouraged by not being elected, she became leader of the *Jubilee 2000* campaign for the cancellation of Africa's debt.

In 2002, in a climate then favourable to regime change, she was elected to the Kenyan Parliament and appointed Secretary of State for the Environment. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2004 won her worldwide recognition. Acclaimed in various international bodies, Wangari received many honours and awards and continued to campaign modestly for development measures on behalf of the poorest people in Africa. In 2005, the American press listed her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. She died of cancer in 2011.

In 2011, seven years after the first African woman had been awarded the Nobel Prize, three more African women were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: President **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**; her Liberian compatriot, **Leymah Gbowee**, the leader of "Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace", a women's peace movement established to deal with the aftermath of the civil war; and a young activist from Yemen, **Tawakkul Karman**, a management graduate, journalist and political activist who, in 2005, founded "Women Journalists Without Chains", an association promoting freedom of expression.

On another note, African women, who have fought and won many different battles, are now recognized as economic players in their own right by a number of institutions that previously regarded them scornfully as part of the *underground* or *informal* economy. They now all contribute to their country's development, whether as surgeons, engineers, accountants, teachers, farmers or craftswomen. The example given of Africa's enterprising market women shows that even illiterate women can display astonishing mastery of international financial markets, by making profits from goods containers imported from Brazil, India and China; women who – often singlehandedly – pay for their children's education at the best Western universities. Furthermore, peasant women, neglected by their governments and by traditional banking systems, secure micro-credits or manage their modest savings in scrupulously

administered tontines. They account for almost half of the continent's agricultural labour force and try to adapt to foreign market constraints by branching out into product processing and marketing or by banding together in cooperatives to optimize their activities. An example of their frequent successes is the switch to alternative exports such as the fair trade, which has given them some financial independence.

What is to be said about mothers who, in a survival economy in African cities, try to make ends meet by undertaking several informal activities in order to raise their children and send them to school? Even when they are in vulnerable, violent situations as a result of war or diseases such as HIV/AIDS – of which they are often, along with their children, the main innocent victims – they never stop fighting to ensure that the world does not consign them to oblivion. All of these women also carry the continent on their shoulders. Governments, inter-African organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS), industrialized countries, aid organizations and cooperation agencies have now realized this and are now mainstreaming women's integration strategies in their poverty reduction programmes.

The great contribution that African women make to world affairs remains unacknowledged because they continue to be undervalued, both in their own countries and worldwide, including in the media. Although they are practically never in the spotlight, they are nonetheless a credible force. Although there are still many obstacles to be cleared in the drive to raise their profile, more and more African women are achieving high levels of attainment, feminizing the various professions, embracing complex technologies and adding great value to a wide range of national skills.

Africa is proud of other women, apart from those mentioned above – the Nigerian economist **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, a graduate of Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), who was appointed Executive Director of the World Bank in 2007 and is now Minister of Finance of Nigeria; **Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**, a medical doctor and ANC activist in the anti-apartheid struggle, who helped to negotiate the accession of the black majority

to power and was Minister of Health in South Africa's first black government under Nelson Mandela. This determined woman was appointed President of the Commission of the African Union in July 2012.

Another South African woman, **Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka**, has also held the torch aloft for African women. Appointed Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa in 2005, this former teacher and ANC member, a business owner, then Member of Parliament, has held various ministerial posts, including that of Minister of Minerals and Energy, and was appointed Executive Director of UN Women in July 2013, succeeding the former Chilean president, Michelle Bachelet.

Africa can also be proud of the Nigerian physicist **Francisca Nneke Okeke**, Dean of the Physics Department of the University of Nsukka, Nigeria, and winner of the 2013 *L'Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science*. It can be proud, too, of **Cecile Kyenge**, the 49-year-old ophthalmologist, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the first black woman elected to Parliament in Italy, where she was appointed Minister for Integration in April 2013 and where she bravely withstands racist onslaughts by a section of the population that objects to a black person in such high office. It was in response to this same type of odious behaviour that the pan-African movement came into being in the nineteenth century.

All of these women must be honoured for they have daringly displayed courage in their struggles and their convictions to the very end, despite the obstacles, violence, difficulties and doubts. Confidence must now be placed in the younger generation of African women – businesswomen, engineers, researchers and community activists – some of whom have recently been hailed by Forbes Magazine as young women of influence who will hold sway in Africa tomorrow.



Part II

Fifty years of fighting for equality (1962-2012)⁷

⁷ This text was produced with the contribution of Ravaomalala Rasoanaivo-Randriamamonjy, consultant to the Africa Department of UNESCO.



The Pan-African Women's Organization, symbol of women's fight for equality

One of the pauses in the African women's struggle for the recognition of their rights and abilities was the creation of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) in 1962, some twelve months before the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Brought together at a conference held in Tanganyika, a group of trailblazers joined forces to provide substantial support to the efforts undertaken by Julius Nyerere Kambarage, first president of Tanzania, against colonialism in Africa and apartheid in South Africa. In this unprecedented thrust towards political consciousness, the women gathered at this conference expressed the need to federate their struggles for equality under the banner of Pan-Africanism. They therefore created the African Women's Organization, which subsequently became the Pan-African Women's Organization at the congress in Dakar in July 1974.

PAWO holds a very particular place in the history of Africa insofar as it has shown the capacity of African mothers and girls to spearhead liberation not only for themselves but for the continent as a whole. The history of Africa certainly provides many examples of women who have risen up and joined forces to fight against injustice wherever it was on the African continent. The creation of PAWO nevertheless expresses something even more profound by displaying the capacity among African women to innovate in the various forms of a collective struggle.

Today, some 25 years after the end of the Cold War and Apartheid, the struggles of the continent no longer have the nature of some generalized geopolitical confrontation. Such struggles have moved elsewhere. They have become more internal to society, within which too many women and girls struggle to have access to the same opportunities as men. PAWO has therefore adopted the task of offering a platform for exchanging views, for leading and sustaining actions against the violation of human rights, particularly those of women, and for strengthening peace throughout the world and on the African continent in

particular. Lastly, PAWO has striven to encourage friendship and cooperation between women and African women throughout the world.

PAWO has thus pursued its endeavours so that the importance, relevance and future perspectives may be adequately underlined on the occasion of this 50th anniversary. In order to assert the global strategic priority that it grants to Africa, as well as to gender equality and capacity-building for women, UNESCO chose to give resonance to this anniversary by organizing at its Headquarters on 14 and 15 November 2012, an event to promote PAWO and its founding members, as well as, more generally, the circumstances and actions of African women. This celebration was conducted in two phases. Firstly, two cultural events: an exhibition on the militancy of women in Africa and a theatrical performance entitled "A Woman in Waiting", produced by Yael Farber and Thembi Mtshali-Jones. Secondly, on the following day, discussions and a round table on the theme of "The role of African women: yesterday, today and tomorrow".

"The role of African women: yesterday, today and tomorrow"

The conference brought together several experts who discussed the political and social actions of African women in the past, present and future. The day was divided into three parts: an opening session, a presentation of the experience of senior personalities, and a round table.



Fig. 14. N'Kosazana Dlamini Zuma (left) and Irina Bokova (right) (Paris, UNESCO, 15 November 2012).

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The opening session, chaired by Ms Dolana Msimang, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of South Africa, began with an address by Ms Irina Bokova, Director-

General of UNESCO. She warmly welcomed the Delegates and participants and wished the conference every success. Mr Maurice Cukierman then paid tribute to the late Dulcie September and other heroines who paid the ultimate price for the liberation of the continent. Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Benin, presented a brief biography of the president of the African Union, Ms Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, who then proceeded to give the inaugural speech.

The session on the description of experience provided by senior personalities, chaired by Ms Antoinette Batumubwira of the African Development Bank, comprised three contributions: Ms Lulama Xingwana, Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, of the Republic of South Africa, described the experience of her country. She was followed by Ms Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, president of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Gabon. Finally, Ms Susan Lyimo, Member of Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, brought the debates of the session to a close.

The round table in the afternoon provided a break in the day. Several contributors took the floor as the meeting was chaired by Ms Elizabeth Paula Napeyok, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Uganda, President of the Africa Group of UNESCO. More specifically and by order of presentation, Ms Zouhour Alaoui, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of Morocco, Ms Catherine Vidrovitch, historian and emeritus professor of the University Paris Denis Diderot, Ms Sylvia Serbin, journalist and historian, Mr Ali Moussa Iye, Head of the History and Memory for Dialogue Section, Culture Sector, UNESCO, Ms Sacha Rubel, programme specialist in the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO, Ms Jane Freedman, programme specialist in the UNESCO Division for Gender Equality, Ms Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Director in charge of issues related to women, gender parity and the development of the African Union, Ms Elisabeth Ilboudo, economist, expert with BNP-Parisbas and representative of the women of the African Diaspora, and Ms Sire Danfakha, President of the Kedougou Association.

The very lively discussions followed on from each other for more than three hours and the day came to an end with a concluding session and a vote of

thanks by Ms Begum Taj, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Tanzania.

The participants laid great emphasis on the need to pursue the action of the founding mothers. The priority objective of such action had for long been the political independence of the African peoples, the unity of the continent and the struggle against colonialism. Another concern has arisen today within this particular task, ensuring that African women enjoy their political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The debate focused on a tribute to the heritage of the founding mothers of the organization, the promotion and development of its experience, the evaluation of its accomplishments and the challenges which the future held in store.

The pioneers of the struggle for independence: the founding mothers of PAWO

As emphasised by Ms **N’Kosazana Dlamini Zuma**, the existence and the action of PAWO, created a year before the Organization for the Unity of Africa (OUA) testify to the pioneering role of African women. This significant fact aptly illustrates the pioneering role of Africa women in the pan-African movement. The mothers of Africa had this intuition of the potential for reflection and action of a movement on a continental scale. In the spirit of Pan-Africanism which found its political expression with the creation of the OUA, they provided women of the continent with a platform for exchange, dialogue and cooperation, not only among themselves but also with women the world over. They therefore developed, as stressed by N’Kosazana Dlamini Zuma, a vision for the continent, recognized the importance of the inclusion of women in decisions that were economic, political, social and cultural to ensure the total emancipation of the continent. The objectives of PAWO also show their preoccupation not only with their liberation but also with that of their country, for the circumstances of their children and for human rights.

The history of PAWO's establishment is closely linked to the personal and professional lives of its founders and of strong women throughout the continent. Through their personal experience and their communities, they had understood the need to consolidate efforts nationwide by developing a pan-African movement. They held up Pan-Africanism as a vision for the continent. The context in which PAWO was founded during the first upheavals of independence was shaped, on the one hand, by the political situation in the various countries and, on the other, by the status of women who faced oppression based both on gender and race. **Catherine Coquery-Vidrovich**, too, has highlighted this dual violence against women whose status was constrained both by the colonial powers and by their traditional leaders' social conformism. Women's campaign to improve their living conditions was of crucial importance to the liberation movements of the time, as evidenced, for example, by the tax revolt of the women of Lomé, the women of Abidjan who marched on the court in Grand Bassam to free their brothers and husbands imprisoned for their political views and the exploits of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. Clearly, they focused on the links between their own situation and that of their countries.

NKosazana Dlamini Zuma stressed this point when she recalled that PAWO emerged at a time when women were becoming organized in order to address not only everyday issues but also ambitions as broad as the liberation of Africa, pooling their objectives to rescue the continent from the grip of colonialism. Their commitment grew during those years of struggle and their political activism eventually led some of them to become leaders of their organizations and senior officials in their countries. They distinguished themselves as activists in nationalist parties, civil rights movements and liberation struggles and took part in political discussions, policy-making and preparations for elections.

Jeanne Martin Cissé, PAWO's first General-Secretary, began her political career in her home country, Guinea, as a member of *Rassemblement démocratique africain* [African Democratic Rally] (RDA). She moved to Senegal with her husband and became involved in the *Union démocratique sénégalaise* [Senegalese Democratic Union], the local branch of the RDA, building on her political commitment and early activism in Guinea. Nevertheless, she remained

in touch with President Sékou Touré, who appointed her to represent the RDA at the Congress of the International Democratic Federation of Women, held in 1954 at Asnières (France).

She ploughed her energy into her adopted country, as did many of her political comrades. Capitalizing on the cross-territorial and enthusiastically federalist ethos of movements and parties that focused on African unity, those women naturally broadened the political scope of their activities.

Funmilayo Ramsome-Kuti (Nigeria), the Lioness of Lisabi, a trade unionist and passionate anti-colonial activist, is famous for leading Egba women in an uprising against an arbitrary tax, resulting in 1949 in the abdication of King Oba Ademola II. She founded the Nigerian Women's Federation, which later became allied with the International Democratic Federation of Women. She also distinguished herself internationally, not least by firing off letters and articles as part of her strategy to keep up the pressure. Her writings show that she had a broad network of connections throughout Africa and beyond. She attended many conferences on women in Africa and the other continents and had close ties with the women's movement in Sierra Leone.

Aoua Keita was a trade unionist and pioneer in the struggle for independence in Mali. She was very active politically, a shrewd strategist and committed to uniting all women in Africa. She embarked on a campaign to raise awareness among African Heads of State to garner their support for the establishment of PAWO.

The development of that vast network of women campaigning for unity was promoted by strong individuals but also by women's movements continent-wide. An initial example of joint action taken to achieve continent-wide union was the *Union des femmes de l'ouest africain* [West African Women's Union] (UFOA) established in 1959. Its founding congress was attended by representatives of women's movements from Guinea, Senegal, French Sudan (now Mali) and Dahomey (now Benin) and enabled many activists to meet each other. Jeanne Martin Cissé was a member of the Guinean delegation and Aoua Keita attended on behalf of Mali.

Despite being extremely short-lived, UFOA encouraged women from French- and English-speaking countries to meet each other. The Women's Union of Guinea-Ghana, established in November 1958 at the First Conference of African Peoples, held in Accra, was extended to Mali in 1961 and established contacts with Nigeria. That same year an initial conference, held in Conakry, was attended by representatives from UFOA, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia, Morocco and Tunisia.

In East Africa, a series of seminars for African women was held in Nairobi in the early 1960s with the support of Margaret Kenyatta, providing a forum for the first discussions of women's issues. Launched as national seminars in Kenya in 1962-1963, they were extended to East Africa in 1964 and were attended by representatives from Tanganyika and Uganda. Some of the women involved in those seminars subsequently worked with the Conference of African Women, which later became PAWO.

As detailed in the previous section, women activists throughout Africa who had forged close ties at those conferences and various other meetings gradually rallied to the idea of uniting African women continent-wide. At a preparatory committee, convened in Bamako from 8 to 10 June 1962, the association was named Conference of African Women. At the invitation of President Nyerere, it held its constituent general assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), from 27 to 31 July 1962. The conference brought together women representing 14 countries and 10 national liberation movements, such as the African National Congress in exile and the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Famous South African activists such as Gertrude Shope, Adelaide Tambo and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela actively organized the Conference. Since then, 31 July has been celebrated as Pan-African Women's Day.

The Conference of African Women was subsequently renamed Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO) at its Congress in Dakar in 1974. It played a key role in building unity and solidarity among African women during the crucial period of their struggle for political emancipation.

It should be borne in mind that, by coordinating their efforts continent-wide, African women paved the way for a major political event, namely the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Indeed, PAWO was established before the OAU, perhaps in much the same way as, in South Africa, the Women's Charter preceded the Freedom Charter, as **Lulama Xingwana**, South Africa's Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, has so rightly observed.

The trailblazing role played by women's movements in Africa, which ultimately established PAWO as a continent-wide organization and encouraged a pan-Africanist approach to the liberation of Africa, is now acknowledged without question. As **Irina Bokova**, Director-General of UNESCO, has said, *"the Pan African Women's Organization was a fellow-traveller on the road to independence. It fought against all forms of discrimination and injustice. It raised the flag of freedom in all parts of the continent"*.

In those turbulent times of the struggles for independence, PAWO's priority objectives were quite naturally the total liberation of the African continent, the elimination of apartheid and the establishment of a common justice system to defend the rights of Man as a human being. The indefatigable endeavours of those freedom fighters and the sacrifices which many of them made, particularly in the armed struggle for national liberation, bear witness to their total commitment to that priority cause. While the part played by African women cannot be denied, it is still not fully recognised. The strength of the hope which many of them embodied in defending that cause confirmed their successors' determination to pursue that task. As aptly recalled by **Mr Maurice Cuckierman**, that was the case of Dulcie September, *"A symbol of Africa against apartheid, racism, and colonialism, a symbol of the fight for the liberation of other continents, and development, a worthy successor of the founding mothers and their dynamism at an international level, who gave great intensity to the voice of the combatants against apartheid in France"*.

Mindful of that commitment, PAWO has enabled the voice of African women and of all African peoples struggling for independence and justice to be

heard. In discussions on the African continent and in many international fora, including those within the United Nations system, it has raised awareness of the discrimination and injustice perpetrated in societies under the colonial yoke. It has shown that African women's movements were at the forefront of the struggle and that they introduced numerous ideas and practices that were later adopted by subsequent international women's movements.

PAWO faced with socioeconomic and cultural development

After African countries had achieved sovereignty, there still remained the immense task of enhancing the status and role of women and addressing various gender inequalities. Once again, PAWO rose to the challenge, rallying people to the issues that were most closely related to women and their empowerment and stepping up efforts in other major areas that were key to its mission. It was keen to continue the fight, launched when independence was being hammered out, for recognition of African women's political, economic and cultural rights and for their effective, responsible participation in the socio-economic and cultural development of Africa and in decision-making on political, social and cultural life, both nationally and internationally.

Such solidarity and commitment have led to undeniable improvement in the status of women during the 50 years of PAWO's history, but that progress remains uncertain and uneven.

Despite such progress, the higher the level of education, the wider the gender disparities. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013-2014, parity has not yet been achieved in sub-Saharan Africa, where the primary-school gender parity index (GPI) is 0.93, which nevertheless constitutes significant progress over its 1999 GPI of 0.85. Of the 137 countries reporting data on secondary education for 1999 and 2010, 28 (including 16 in sub-Saharan Africa) had fewer than 90 girls to every 100 boys in 1999. Of the 30 countries with fewer than 90 girls to every 100 boys at secondary school in 2010, 18 were in sub-Saharan Africa. In higher education, there are six female students

to every ten male students in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with eight male students to every ten female students in North America and Western Europe.

Although the education and literacy gender disparities are narrowing in African countries, much remains to be done to guarantee gender equality in those areas. In many countries, the illiteracy rate among women remains high. Encouraging progress has been made in curriculum development, teaching materials and textbooks to improve girls' self-image, life and work opportunities.

The solution to the current and future challenges of sustainable development in Africa lies in the successful mobilization of all of its people, especially women. The full scientific potential of this half of its population must therefore be harnessed continent-wide. Efforts to that end to date seem to be inadequate for, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, only 34.5 per cent of all researchers in 2010 were women. In addition, as in other parts of the world, they are too often consigned to "female" sectors and few of them hold senior posts.

It is difficult to measure the progress that women have achieved in reducing poverty, of which they are the primary victims, but they are known to be quite successful when they take control of their own destiny and that of their families and communities, particularly through micro-credit funded projects and small-scale community projects. In its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), established in 2003, NEPAD stressed that businesswomen not only invested in their businesses but also placed a premium on social investments in their communities. **Irina Bokova** paid tribute to those women as the prime movers of change in areas of great importance to their businesses and their communities, namely the promotion of quality education, access to health care, fighting for their rights and full participation, while promoting peace, reconciliation and development.

Many African countries are taking action nationally to provide better protection for women, particularly in the area of rights and equality. **Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo**, President of the Constitutional Court of Gabon, confirmed

that women are an integral part of the nation-building process, through their traditional and their modern tasks, stressing that such improvement has been enshrined in law. The constitutions of a number of countries acknowledge gender equality.

Several countries have launched programming procedures to include gender issues in their poverty reduction strategies and to establish mechanisms to map gender equality in projects and activities, while redirecting public expenditure to women-empowerment programmes. Welfare and social security systems are being expanded in some countries to include special schemes for unemployed women, micro-credit and pensions for elderly women.

Clear progress has been made in women's education. Education is one of the MDG success stories in Africa, owing largely to the introduction of free, compulsory primary education by many governments.

Despite commitments to improving women's health and although specific targeted action has been taken in the area of reproductive health, maternal mortality in Africa remains the highest in the world because women lack access to services and information on sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

Conversely, progress towards equal representation of women in politics has, however, been most striking, but it is necessary now to do more than merely encourage women to stand for parliament – women's capacities must be enhanced so that they can play a more active role in parliamentary debates and decisions.

South Africa and Uganda now have 30 per cent quotas for women in parliament. The Tanzanian parliamentarian **Susan Liymo** drew attention to her country's example: in 1985, women held 9 per cent of the seats in Parliament against the current 36.7 per cent, and women held 25 per cent of ministerial posts. In Rwanda, female representation stands at 64 per cent – the highest in the world. Women preside over parliaments or one of the houses of parliament in Botswana, Gabon, Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania

and Zimbabwe. In countries such as Nigeria, women have held key ministerial posts such as defence and finance. In Morocco, as **H.E. Ms Zouhur Alaoui**, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Morocco to UNESCO, reported, women have moved on from the ability to influence to the ability to act. In 2007, female representation in the Moroccan government had set a new record with seven key ministerial posts held by women. As the Ambassador pointed out at PAWO's 50th anniversary celebrations, 10 women were ambassadors, 60 parliamentarians, 39 high-ranking officials and two Governors, in addition to one woman heading the Moroccan employers' confederation..

PAWO and the African Union

Progress has also been achieved at the continental level. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the OAU, the African Union Commission elected a woman, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, as its Chairperson. As **Ms Litha Musyimi-Ogana**, Director for Women, Gender and Development of the African Union Commission, has stressed, the Organization had already made significant progress in women's empowerment by establishing a gender policy framework, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, a Gender Policy, the African Women's Decade (2010-2020), the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and a funding mechanism through the African Women's Development Fund.

Within that general framework, concrete action had been taken, such as the implementation, in collaboration with the Peace and Security Department of the African Union, of a programme for the elimination of gender-based violence, including the production of a manual for use by the stabilization forces, codes of conduct and manuals for pre- and post-deployment instructors. In 2012, the Peace and Security Department of the United Nations and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) cooperated in implementing a project for the newly-elected women parliamentarians in Somalia. As part of the African Women's Decade, during which a specific theme has been planned for each

year, the African Union had begun to mobilize resources to fund grass-roots initiatives. In 2012, the theme was agriculture and food security.

Outlook and challenges for the future

These few – and by no means exhaustive – examples show the extent to which women’s advocacy, through movements and organizations such as PAWO, remains vital, given the scale of the challenges and continuing obstacles. As **Ms Lulama Xingwana**, South Africa’s Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, stressed, the founding mothers opened doors, and the time has come for the current generation to take the lead. She drew attention to the vital importance of education in enabling Africa’s people to take up the challenges currently faced by Africa. Here, too, the firm commitment of African women, particularly through continent-wide solidarity movements, and their pioneering role were crucial to the advancement of their cause.

As **Ms Irina Bokova** stressed, there are no insurmountable obstacles to women’s empowerment, which is also a struggle for human rights. She believes that women all too often pay the heaviest price through poverty, exclusion and violence – yet they are the ones who can put an end to those ills if they are given the means to do so. Furthermore, if growth in Africa is to be sustainable, it is essential to include women and to unleash their potential.

Education: a priority

Education is the only weapon that can combat cultural and social prejudice and violence against women, promote their political emancipation and combat a patriarchal culture and inequality within the family. In her address at the conference held to mark the 50th anniversary of PAWO, **Ms Zouhur Alaoui** said that education helped to disseminate culture and to break down religious, ideological and economic barriers, and that the emergence and consolidation of democracy must be underpinned by universal access to quality education. In the same vein, **Ms Sittou Rashadat Mohamed**, the first woman parliamentarian in the Comoros and a former Minister of Social Affairs and

Labour, referring to her own personal experience, said that she had been able to convey her message on the status of Comorian women owing to her public-speaking experience as a teacher.

Education, the key to women's emancipation, must not only provide for skills development but must also instil from early childhood the values of love, equality and mutual respect. It must help to transmit the legacy of the founding mothers of PAWO to the younger generations, so that they can have strong role models to build up their self-confidence. The founding mothers' courage must be held up so that their work can be continued by young girls. Research on women in Africa and the dissemination of research findings are therefore of prime importance. **Ms Sylvia Serbin** called for such research to be encouraged and facilitated, especially at the local level, in order to safeguard women's historical heritage and preserve their achievements.

Education is essential to strengthening women's ability to participate in their countries' and their entire continent's development. Development cannot be sustainable unless peace is established and maintained throughout Africa. Women's movements must therefore address the issues involved in building a more peaceful Africa. With this in mind, **Ms NKosazana Dlamini Zuma** said that it was vital to ensure that women's voices were heard in conflict zones, reconciliation efforts, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. In that connection, **Ms Lulama Xingwana** hoped that Africa, with women at the helm, could overcome conflict and war and the abuse and rape that were still being used as weapons of war.

For an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa

Women must be actively involved in the continental integration agenda advocated by the African Union so that peace can be built in Africa and its people's well-being can be secured. **Ms NKosazana Dlamini Zuma** reported that the Union wished to ensure that women could play a role in key areas such as innovation, infrastructure and the information and communication technology revolution.

Gender was one of the Commission's eight priorities; it was priority number 2 of its Strategic Plan for 2014-2017, which provided for "*mainstreaming women and youth into all our activities*". The strategy in that area was designed to ensure that a gender dimension was taken on board in regional economic communities in order to enable African peoples to experience globalization in a way that would not lead to even further marginalization of Africa in general and of women in particular.

Women, who make up half of the continent, must participate in their countries' political, economic and social development and so transform African societies and economies. That was a prerequisite if the growth currently enjoyed by Africa is to be sustainable. During the debates leading to the drafting and adoption of the African Union's "Agenda 2063", emphasis was laid on the need to ensure greater equity and the inclusion of young people and women and to build on their potential to achieve the transformation towards a prosperous Africa at peace with itself and a major player in world affairs.

The peoples of the continent are central to such change and to inclusive economic and social development, which is crucial for a prosperous Africa whose ambition is not to be less poor, but not to be poor at all. Women, who are key human resources for such changes and the growth on the continent, must participate not only as workers but also as owners of the means of production. Moreover, as politics affects their lives, they must participate by being in government and by running political parties and their activities.

Those goals are being hotly debated internationally, including in the United Nations system, as part of the post-2015 discussions. In her opening speech at the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2014, the Executive Director of UN Women, **Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**, forcefully restated her organization's intention to campaign for a separate, global gender-equality goal and for the mainstreaming of gender equality into all areas of the new framework. She had already defended that approach at PAWO's Ninth Congress, held in South Africa in 2008, when she said "*...when one looks at the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is very clear that if we are able to address the challenges of women, most*

of those development goals would be achieved and Africa could even excel. [...] If we are able to conquer poverty of women, we would have conquered poverty of children. If we conquer poverty of women, it means we would have conquered intergenerational poverty”.

Referring to her own personal experience, **Ms Susan Lyimo** stressed the need to encourage women to make an effective contribution to politics, which was essential if their role in society was to develop positively and their interests were to be taken into account. Without such participation, the goals of equality, peace and development goals could not be achieved.

For renewed solidarity and cooperation

PAWO will continue to play an important role in mobilizing women in the daily struggle for empowerment and a better life. It must, first and foremost, continue the tradition of solidarity between women and between generations. In her opening address at the 50th anniversary of the organization, **Ms NKosazana Dlamini Zuma** said that, just as the founding mothers of PAWO had bequeathed a better Africa to the current generation, it, too, must leave a better Africa for the next, assuredly defend their victories and win others.

A revitalized and united PAWO will continue to give African women a voice and to help them to clear any hurdles on their path to empowerment. **Ms Lulama Xingwana** hoped that the Organization would support joint action taken by women and would help them to speak with one voice so that their priorities would be addressed holistically. Her views were echoed by **H.E. Ms Dolana Msimang**, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of South Africa to UNESCO, who hoped that women’s movements such as PAWO would defend women’s causes such as those discussed during the conference. She called, for example, for 50 per cent of the members of the scientific committee for the *General History of Africa* to be women, for gender-equality legislation to be passed, for 50 per cent of political party candidates standing for election to be women and for more women to be appointed to companies’ boards of directors.

PAWO must therefore be strengthened in order to perform its tasks successfully in the complex environment within which it operates. Accordingly, **Ms Sire Dafanka** called for the organization's profile to be raised so that it can be a model for everyone and give generations of young African women and girls, including those of the Diaspora, the desire to continue to act and make their mark so that the history of black Africa will no longer be written without including women to a large extent. **Ms Elisabeth Ilboudo** stated that the anniversary of PAWO should provide an opportunity for furthering projects such as the one she presented on the fight against maternal and perinatal mortality.

In PAWO's future endeavours, UNESCO will cooperate actively through many projects. In that regard, it must be recalled that UNESCO gives priority to education when collaborating with others in order to mainstream gender equality into education policy and teacher training. A special role could be assigned to the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, launched by the Director-General of UNESCO in May 2011, which focuses on access to secondary education and women's literacy.

In addition, UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality already works with African women to strengthen women's role as prime movers of change, positive transformation and progress. It supports them in combating women's exclusion from political decision-making and in countering discrimination and violence. It has launched a capacity-building drive to improve research on gender equality, in conjunction with the Regional Centre for Research and Documentation on Women, Gender and Peace-building in the Great Lakes Region, based in Kinshasa. It is currently preparing to launch a future centre to combat feminine genital mutilation and a programme of activities linked to strengthening regional capacity for research on the underlying causes of genital mutilations in order to develop policies for their elimination.

The pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa* (GHA), presented at the conference by **Mr Ali Moussa Iye**, of the Culture Sector of UNESCO, is another major project which contributes to the construction of African identity and citizenship, in order to assess the contribution which African civilisations have made to the progress of humanity but also and more particularly to help

Africans take in hand initiatives for their present and their future. Gender issues have hitherto been insufficiently addressed. Measures will be taken to improve the representation of women on the Scientific Committee and increase the number of female authors and contributors. A ninth volume of the General History of Africa was launched in May 2013 at a meeting of experts in Addis Ababa on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The purpose of this volume is to update the GHA in regard to new challenges and also to tackle the role of women.

Another extremely promising cross-cutting project entitled “Women in African History: An E-Learning Tool”, under Phase II of the General History of Africa. This tool, presented by **Ms Sasha Rubel**, programme specialist in the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO, features digital comic strips, teaching materials and downloadable multimedia content. Dovetailing with the Organization’s two overall priorities – Africa and gender equality – the tool has been posted online to promote education on the GHA. It is a response to the need for promoting gender equality by highlighting women of historical significance in the history of Africa and its Diaspora.

It will highlight the lives of 25 historical women who, from ancient times to the present day, have made great contributions to the history of Africa in every field - politics, art, environmental protection, the social and solidarity economy, science, women’s rights and human rights. It was launched in November 2013 at the 37th session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

To ensure that these and other projects have the desired impact on improving the status of African women, UNESCO is engaged in dynamic interaction with the African Union and women’s organizations in Africa and the Diaspora, including PAWO. UNESCO is therefore particularly gratified that it can rely on PAWO’s cooperation and on continuous dialogue with the African Union. The Union joined in this message of hope at PAWO’s 50th anniversary celebrations, calling for ever stronger cooperation in the coming 50 years.



Appendices



Annex 1

Programme: 50th Anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (14-15 November 2012, UNESCO Headquarters)

Wednesday 14 November 2012

17:30 – 18:00

Inauguration of the Exhibition on Women's Activism in Africa by the Chairperson of UNESCO Africa Group (Foyer Room I)

18:05 – 19:30

Theatre Performance: A Woman in Waiting (Room I)

Thursday 15 November 2012

10:00 – 11:40

● **OPENING SESSION** (Room XI)

Chair:

Welcome remarks by **Ms Dolana Msimang**, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of South Africa

Opening Remarks by **Ms Irina Bokova**, Director General of UNESCO

Address by Ms Assetou Koite, President of PAWO

Tribute to the late Dulcie September and other heroines who paid the supreme price for Liberation by **Mr Maurice Cukierman**

Brief biography of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission by **Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai**, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Benin

Keynote Address by **Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**, Chairperson of the African Union Commission

11:45 – 13:00

● **HIGH LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSIONS**

Theme: “*The Role of African Women: Past, Present and Future*”
(Part I)

Moderator:

Ms Antoinette Batumubwira, African Development Bank

Panelists:

Ms Lulama Xingwana, Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities of the Republic of South Africa

Ms Susan Lyimo, Member of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania

Ms Marie-Madeleine Mborantsuo, Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Gabon

13h00 – 14h30

● **LUNCH BREAK** (7th Floor)

14h30 – 18h00

● **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS**

Presentations on the theme “*The Role of African Women: Past, Present and Future*” (Part II)

Moderator:

Ms Elizabeth Paula Napeyok, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Uganda, Chairperson of the UNESCO Africa Group

Discussants:

Ms Zohour Alaoui, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Kingdom of Morocco

Ms Catherine Vidrovitch, Historian and Emeritus Professor of Paris Diderot University -Paris VII

Ms Sylvia Serbin, Journalist/Historian

Mr Ali Moussa Iye, Chief of Section, CLT/UNESCO and **Ms Sacha Rubel**, CI/UNESCO – “Women Figures in African History: An e-Learning Tool”

Ms Jane Freeman, Programme Specialist, Division for Gender Equality, UNESCO

Ms Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Director: Women, Gender and Development, African Union

Ms Elisabeth Ilboudo, Economist, Senior Expert at BNP Bank

Ms Sire Danfakha, Chairperson of Association Kedougou

● **DISCUSSIONS**

● **CONCLUSION AND VOTE OF THANKS**

by **Ms Begum Taj**, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the United Republic of Tanzania

Annex 2

Speech by Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, 15 November 2012

Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ministers, Excellencies, Permanent Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to celebrate with you the 50th anniversary of the *Pan-African Women's Organization*. I am especially pleased to celebrate this at UNESCO headquarters and for this celebration.

I wish first and foremost to thank the Permanent Delegates and Ambassadors of South Africa and Tanzania. This reflects not only the decision taken by Member States at the UNESCO General Conference, but I would say fundamentally, this reflects values written into UNESCO's DNA. Gender Equality and Africa are the two global priorities of UNESCO. The two are closely linked. The rise of women means the rise of Africa. This is my personal determination, and this is UNESCO's commitment.

It is a special pleasure to welcome Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. Dr. Dlamini Zuma, in your acceptance speech last July, you stated: "*My election is not a personal victory, but a victory for the African continent in general and for women in particular.*"

I believe we all agree wholeheartedly. You said also, "*The future of Africa is inextricably linked with that of the rest of humanity -- Africa must take its rightful place among nations of the world as an equal reliable partner, and full member of the international community.*"

This goal has guided the *Pan-African Women's Organization* since its creation in 1962, one year before the Organization for African Unity. The *Pan-African*

African Women's Organization has accompanied the rise of independence. It has fought against all forms of discrimination and injustice. It has raised the flag for freedom in every part of the continent. Since 1962, Africa has changed, and it has helped change the world. Looking back, we see there are no insurmountable barriers to women's empowerment.

We see the importance of pioneers in leading the way. Dr. Dlamini Zuma is one such pioneer. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia is another. So is her compatriot, the peace activist Leymah Gbowee, with whom she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, along with Tawakkol Karman of Yemen. On 25 September 2011, the world lost Wangari Maathai – the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, a famous scientist from Kenya. Many remarkable African men have won the Prize – but Wangari Maathai gave it a special lustre that was meaningful to girls and women everywhere.

I think of these great women today, but I think also of all the pioneers across the continent. Women are leading change in small ways that matter for their societies and communities – advancing quality education and access to healthcare, fighting for rights, struggling for full participation, promoting peace, reconciliation and development.

We celebrate these women today. The African Union has declared this the *Decade of the African Woman* (2010-2020). This recognizes the importance of gender equality for the full blossoming of the continent. Women's empowerment is a struggle for human rights, but it is also the struggle for societies that make the most of all their citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For 50 years, the Pan-African Women's Organization has brought about considerable progress in women's rights. In Africa today, there are more girls in classrooms – more women running companies – more women in various decision-making spheres.

We need such inspiration as the road towards true equality is still a long one. All too often, women pay the greatest price in terms of poverty, exclusion and violence – and yet they are those who can bring such a situation to an end, provided we give them the means to do so. Wherever we seek to find the means to ensure better management of water resources, to improve children's health, and to make peace between rival communities, the primary interlocutors are mothers, spouses, namely women.

All human beings profit from gender equality. It is the basis of the most equitable and strongest societies facing the significant changes which the African continent is experiencing. Africa, today, is enjoying growth but for that growth to be sustainable, it must include women and unleash their potential.

This task starts with education. That is why UNESCO is cooperating with governments and civil society in order to integrate gender equality in education policies and teacher training.

In May 2011, I launched the World partnership for the education of girls and women by targeting access to secondary education and women's literacy. In Senegal, for example, UNESCO is working with Proctor and Gamble for the benefit of 10,000 girls and women in seven regions in community training centres.

In Kenya, we are training groups of women in water management in arid and semi-arid areas. In Tanzania, we help women journalists to disseminate information on women's rights via the radio. We must act at one and the same time at the heart of the various communities and with the States in order to formulate policies and to create conditions for change.

To succeed, we can rely on constant cooperation with the African Union and UNESCO welcomes the constant dialogue that we have established. To succeed, we can, above all, rely on the courage and commitment of all African women and the African diaspora. We can accompany them in many many

ways, giving greater confidence by beginning to reveal the part they play in history and that constitutes a major approach in our work for encouraging the pedagogical use of the General History of Africa.

Furthermore, I would like to praise the support provided by Brazil, Angola and Bulgaria in the development of pedagogical resources and, in this particular case, on-line pedagogical resources on the role of women in the economic, social, political and cultural development of Africa.

My thoughts turns towards the very fine text of the Costa Rican poetess of African dissent, Shirley Campbell, which is a hymn to all black women:

*"When I look at my face
In the mirror...
My courageously black skin...
I feel myself
Absolutely free
Absolutely black
Absolutely magnificent."*

May I thank you all for procuring so boldly the voice of African women and I praise your struggle – which is also mine, and that of all women throughout the world.

Annex 3

Address by Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, 15 November 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by extending warm congratulations to you my sisters, friends and comrades on this great occasion to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our organization, the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO). Allow me to thank our dear sister, Lala Ben Barka, and through her UNESCO together with the Permanent Delegations of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Republic of South Africa for working together to make this anniversary a reality.

To the Executive Committee and members of PAWO, a happy 50th anniversary and best wishes for the next fifty years!

PAWO was formed a year ahead of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1962 as testimony to the pioneering spirit of African women who realized the importance of consolidating their national efforts for freedom, to build a pan-African women's movement.

These pioneers of Pan-Africanism on our continent articulated their founding objectives, to include

“... the struggle for recognition and the right of African women to participate in decision making in the fields of political, economic, cultural and social life;

to contribute to the improvement of the situation of African women ... and children;

eliminating flagrant violation of human rights;

the protection of Africa in all aspects;

the effective unity among African States through friendship and cooperation;

continuous relations of friendship and cooperation between Africa and women all over the world;

and (participation) in all action for disarmament and reinforcement of peace worldwide.”

Thus, a year before the “founding fathers” of the OAU gathered in Addis Ababa in 1963, the “founding mothers” already put their stake in the ground and outlined an inclusive Pan-Africanism as their vision for the continent. If we therefore look at PAWO’s founding objectives, they recognize the importance of the inclusion of women in economic, political, social and cultural decision-making to the total emancipation of the continent. The objectives also showed the concerns of the African women’s movement, not only with their own liberation, but also as patriots, for the liberation of their countries, their concerns for the situation of children and for human rights issues.

Their Pan-Africanism recognized the importance of protecting the sovereignty of Africa, and called for the “effective unity” of the continent through friendship and cooperation. Furthermore, it recognized Africa as part of a global village, and thus the need for solidarity with Women of the World and the commitment to disarmament and peace.

When our sisters formed PAWO in 1962, they were building on centuries of history of the women of our continent from the North to the South, East, West and Central Africa. These include women leaders from the earliest epochs of human civilizations and from a variety of spheres – political, social, military, economic, religious and cultural. They include the seventh-century Berber Queen Kahina of the Maghreb, the ninth century Magajiyas of Daura, the legendary sixteenth-century Queen Nehanda of Zimbabwe, and not to forget

Makeda the Queen of Sheba in Ethiopia, Queen Ahmose-Nefertiti of Egypt, Yaa Asantewa of the Ashanti Empire, Dahia Al-Kahina of Mauritania and Buktu of Mali.

Apart from these greats, women were an integral part of the mainstream of communities and societies, not only in the reproduction of these societies, but also as traders, farmers and crafters. Across the length and breadth of Africa, in virtually every society, across the centuries women also organized in groups of kinship, in market and traders' associations and in various social and cultural formations, around both their reproductive and productive roles. They realized the importance of cooperation and that there is strength in organization.

The curse of slavery and colonialism, exploiting the productive and reproductive labour of African men and the continent's women, naturally changed the course of history of all our peoples. This curse had a specific gender dimension, with scholars highlighting how "African women lost power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops and their exclusion from the global marketplace" (1) on the one hand and how slavery and colonial administrations not only entrenched patriarchal relations, but enforced a system of double oppression of African women, on the basis of race and gender.

Here too, women were not passive victims, but took their place in the struggles against slavery and colonialism on the continent and in the Diaspora. The national women's movements which participated in these struggles emerged from the traditional associations and varied groups, whether social, welfare, religious or cultural organizations. Thus African women took their place in national liberation and anti-colonial movements, in the political and armed struggles. They also became victims of assassinations, like Dulcie September who was the representative of the African National Congress here in Paris. She was gunned down as she entered her office one morning. Her assassins are still at large. Ruth First was killed by a letter bomb in Maputo.

What emerged from these struggles, across the length and breadth of the continent, was a process of women mobilizing on their own, either around issues of immediate needs or together with their menfolk around broader

issues of liberation. In the process of these struggles, a distinct women's perspective emerged, with various degrees of success in bringing the issue of the emancipation of the women to the national liberation struggles.

The Pan-African Women's Organization emerged in the context of these struggles and provided unity of purpose for the founding generations to mobilize women to participate in the struggles to rid the continent of the scourge of colonialism.

We can say with confidence that the founders of PAWO and the OAU have delivered on this mission.

What then is our mission today, as we celebrate the first 50 years of the Pan-African Women's Organization, and for the next fifty years of PAWO and of the African Union (AU)?

The African Union at its July 2012 summit agreed that there was a need for the continent to define a continent-wide development agenda, that would enable Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and civil society, including the women's movement, to develop an accelerated agenda, through which we could meet the vision set out in the AU Constitutive Act of a peaceful, integrated, people-centred and prosperous Africa.

This Africa-wide agenda is critical for all of us, because if we do not take ownership of this process, an agenda will be defined for us, and we will merely be passengers, instead of drivers of our own development. For the gender and women's movement, this requires addressing such issues as:

- (a) *Creating a peaceful Africa and world:* the global African and Diaspora women's movement has been a pillar in the creation of the global peace movement. What are the lessons we can learn from this to enable us to ensure the participation of women in creating a more peaceful World? How do we ensure that women and young people in conflict areas in Africa have a voice, in both conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction? What more needs to be done, as men and women to

address gender-based violence, in all of our countries, peaceful and conflict ridden alike? How do we socialize our boys and girls from birth so that they understand love, equality and mutual respect from an early age? Adults can only bring to society what society taught them as children.

- (b) The integration of Africa: our gender protocols and machinery call for gender equity in all structures of the AU and its organs, including the RECs. The integration challenges that continue to face us relate to infrastructure, people to people interactions and movement of intra-Africa trade, our communications network, the development of our human resources and capabilities. In these integrated areas, we must ensure that women play a role. For example, what are the issues with regard to infrastructure for women, and are we ensuring that girls and young women are also part of the information communication revolution? Are we ensuring that in each of our RECs we participate to ensure gender mainstreaming? Furthermore, how do we ensure that globalization does not further marginalize Africa in general and women in particular, and that we build a more just global order?
- (c) A people-centred agenda: Our people should be at the centre of development and change. This means that women, as half of the continent's population, should be at the centre of development and change. We must therefore advocate human development as the key component of both social and economic development. In this regard, education and health are critical, including the issues of maternal and infant mortality, and expanding opportunities for education and skills for women and youth.
- (d) A prosperous Africa: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are important markers and indicators in the short-term, and we must consider in the remaining years how we can accelerate the process of meeting these goals, at all levels. However, the MDGs are but a minimum platform. Our mission is not to be less poor, it is to be prosperous. Our Africa-wide agenda for the next 50 years must therefore address inclusive economic

and social development and growth, innovation, the development of science and technology and human resource development.

- We are endowed with natural resources, for 30 per cent of the mineral resources in the world are in our continent. Do we really own these natural resources or are they physically located in our geographical space but benefiting mainly other continents? Do we as women have a stake in these natural resources? Do we own mining companies including oil companies?
- Our natural resources are transported across the oceans. Are you part of the ownership of shipping vessels? I met a group of women who work in the shipping industry and who expressed their dream of one day owning the shipping vessels. How do we ensure that the dream becomes a reality in the next 50 years?
- Women in agriculture: How do we ensure that they really grow enough for local consumption and for export? How do they also get involved in the agro-industry so that they export value-added products?
- As tourism increases, women must be part of that industry, not only as low skilled workers but as managers and owners.
- As we move towards renewable energy, are women going to be part of that green revolution or are we going to be bystanders? Women should not continue to be only workers but should own the means of production.
- Women also need to participate effectively in political parties. That is where policies that affect women's lives now and in the future are decided. We should not only be supporters and voters but should be in leadership of political parties and government. We should be part of the centre of development. The Scandinavian countries have a lot of women in decision making. Sometimes women think that they should

not be in politics, but politics decides whether a village has electricity, running water, roads, schools, clinics, hospitals or not.

- Industrial and trade policies. We must get involved in countries where there is inclusive development and equitable wealth distribution. Let us ensure that the twenty-first century is the African century by making sure that it is a women's century as well. The next 50 years have more possibilities than the founders of PAWO had, but they still bequeathed to us a better Africa than the one they found.

Let us utilize the opportunities at our disposal to bequeath to future generations an even better Africa than the one that we found. The future of Africa has not been brighter. We should not become a generation of missed opportunities.

Once more we are very grateful to UNESCO for this anniversary and we hope to strengthen this partnership in the next 50 years.

Annex 4

Outcome Document of 50th anniversary of PAWO Celebration

The event marking the 50th anniversary of the Pan African Women's Organization was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, on 14-15 November, and was themed "The Role of African Women: Past, Present and Future". That event was a joint initiative by the Permanent Delegations of the Republic of South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania in cooperation with UNESCO. In addition to the Ambassadors of the sponsoring countries, Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ms Marie-Madeleine Morantsuo, the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Gabon, Ms Luluma Xingwana, the Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities of the Republic of South Africa, and Honourable Susan Lyimo, a member of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, participated in the opening ceremony.

His Excellency Professor Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yai, the Ambassador of Benin, Her Excellency Ms Zouhour Alaoui, the Ambassador of Morocco, and Her Excellency Ms Elizabeth Paula Napeyok, the Ambassador of Uganda were also among the participants at the event and were joined by Ms Antoinette Batumubwira, African Development Bank, Ms Catherine Vidrovitch, historian, Ms Sylvia Serbin, journalist and historian, Ms Elisabeth Ilboudo, an economist and senior expert at the BNP Bank, Ms Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Women, Gender and Development Director at the African Union, Ms Sire Danfakha, Chairperson of the Kedougou Association, Ms Jane Freedman, Programme Specialist in the Division for Gender Equality at UNESCO, Mr Ali Moussa, Chief of Section in the Culture Sector at UNESCO, who was assisted by Ms Sacha Rubel of the Communication and Information Sector, responsible for working on an e-learning tool on Women Figures in African History.

African women's accomplishments through various struggles in the history of the continent were highlighted and applauded. Nevertheless, discussion and recommendations focused on the challenges still facing African women today, both on the continent and in the Diaspora. The main challenges and recommendations are highlighted below.

Preamble

1. We owe it to women who sacrificed themselves to continue waging a relentless struggle against poverty, famine, illiteracy, unemployment, gender inequalities and disease.
2. Only education can cause the eradication of violence against women and dismantle economic and religious barriers as well as promote the political emancipation of women.
3. PAWO should lead with programmes to empower women to achieve food security and the fight against hunger and poverty and in moving the Nairobi Declaration on women forward.
4. We need to take ownership of the process of creating an Africa-wide Agenda in meeting the AU vision of a peaceful, integrated, people-centred and prosperous Africa.
5. We need affirmative policy legislation, which can be achieved through strong women movements and PAWO has a role to play in this area.
6. The rise of women means the rise of Africa

Recommendations and Proposals

1. ***We owe it to women who sacrificed themselves to continue waging a relentless struggle against poverty, famine, illiteracy, unemployment, gender inequalities and disease.***
 - PAWO should lead with programmes to empower women and in moving forward the Nairobi Declaration on women.
 - Priority areas are the fight against:
 - Disease such as HIV and transmission to children;
 - Food insecurity;
 - Gender-based violence;
 - Poverty and illiteracy;
 - And for the development of rural women.
 - Maternal Health is still far from satisfactory while child mortality has not been reduced as much as expected. Supporting initiative to improve maternal health and reduce child mortality is essential in reversing these statistics.
 - It is important to teach history to the younger generations; a general history project for the development of Pan-African values and identity is currently being worked on.
 - Women need to help other women raise to prominent positions and can be agents of positive change.

2. ***We need to educate our children from birth to understand love, equality and mutual respect so that they can bring the right values to society.***

- We need to educate our children from birth to understand love, equality and mutual respect so that they can bring the right values to society.
- Educating girls/women including teaching history and the role women have played in history is paramount.
- Use the partnership with UNESCO to further the education mandate and thus benefit from its many educational tools such as the e-learning multilingual platform currently being developed by UNESCO to teach the general history of Africa and especially the history of some of the prominent women of Africa, including those from the Diaspora. This tool is due to be launched internationally soon.
- Capitalize on initiatives such as the UN “Education First” initiative to ensure that every child gets an education.

3. ***We need to take ownership of the process of creating an Africa-wide Agenda in meeting the AU vision of a peaceful, integrated, people-centred and prosperous Africa.***

- For a peaceful continent, the following must be addressed:
- We need to find ways to ensure that women and young people in conflict areas have a voice;
 - More needs to be done to address gender-based violence across the continent;

- We need to look at the following for an integrated Continent:
 - We need to ensure that women play a role in areas that still present integration challenges such as infrastructure, people to people interactions, intra-Africa trade, the development of human resources and capabilities, among others;
 - We need to ensure that globalization does not further marginalize Africa in general and women in particular and is more equitable;

- With regard to a prosperous Africa:
 - Attaining the MDGs is the very minimum, our goal should be to attain inclusive economic and social development and growth as well as development of science, technology, human resources and innovation;
 - Owning our mineral resources and ensuring that women have a real stake in the same;
 - Owning companies such as shipping, mining or oil;
 - Ensuring that women work in all areas and especially pertinent ones such as agro-industry where they can export value added products;
 - Assure the equitable distribution of wealth by having women in all areas of the economy.

4. ***We need affirmative policy legislation, which can be achieved through strong women movements and PAWO has a role to play in this area.***

For example in Tanzania, positive discrimination and affirmative legislation policies have raised the number of women in government and administration as follows:

- 50% in the judiciary
- 50% district commissioners
- 25% ministers
- 35% deputy ministers

- A truly democratic and representative government cannot be established without women's participation in the political processes.
- Women should be in positions where they participate in the creation of policies that affect them and their futures.
- Political will at the highest level and the participation of all political and social actors, consolidated by legal texts are indispensable elements for the evolution of the woman's status and her inclusion as one of the participants in the development of her country.

5. ***The rise of women means the rise of Africa***

- Women in prominent positions (government, parliament, etc.) need to help other women rise to prominent positions through initiatives such as positive discrimination.
- Women are often the ones who suffer the most from poverty, exclusion and violence and yet they are also the ones who can end these injustices if they are given the means.
- Women should be part of the core of development and in leadership positions; practise has shown that the most equitable societies are those where women are active participants in the decision-making processes and where they occupy leadership positions.

Conclusion

PAWO's partnership with UNESCO is not only appreciated, but it is hoped it will be strengthened in order to advance the agenda of women empowerment and ensuring that women and girls are included in society in the fullest possible way. The discussions yielded strong points that need to be taken further with a view to improving current policies on women empowerment or the implementation of existing ones. A future symposium to advance some of the points brought up as well as provide a platform of exchange of best practices would be highly desirable. Member States were encouraged to get in touch with historians in order to cooperate with them in building up the history data.

Annex 5

The founding mothers of the Pan-African Women's Organization

- a. List of the Delegations having attended the Conference of African Women (CAF) at Dar es Salaam in Tanganika, present-day Tanzania in July 1962 (in alphabetical order)

Congo-Brazaville : Mme Ida Vitorine Ngampolo, Mme Romaine Ekouya Poaty, Mme Antoinette Badila Makaya, Mme Okotaka-Ebalé;

Côte d'Ivoire : Ms Jeanne Gervais, Ms Delphine Yaye ;

Ethiopia : Ms Judith Imru, Ms Almaz Eshete, Ms Yeshi Tadesse ;

Ghana : Ms Emilia Aryec, Ms Sophia Deku, Ms Emily Senalor, Ms Pauline Clark ;

Guinea Conakry : Ms Jeanne Martin Cisse, Ms Fatou Condé, Ms Sow Nima, Ms Camara Snoba ;

Kenya : Ms Margaret Kenyatta, Ms Alice Mbenya Kivuvani, Ms Ludia Langat, Ms Christina Wagari ;

Liberia : Ms Etta Wright, Ms Mary Mc Critty-Fisko, Ms Angie Brooks ;

Mali : Ms Aoua Keita, Ms Attaher Jeannette Haidara, Ms Sow Aissata Coulibaly, Ms Traore Aissata Berthe ;

Niger : Ms Dante Aminata, Ms Barkire Salmon ;

Senegal : Ms Caroline Diop, Ms Virginie Camara, Ms Sane Thérèse Cavalho, Ms Ba Aminata ;

Tanganyka : Ms Bibi Titi, Mme (Bibi) Dorothy Kashaija, Ms Bernadette Kunambi, Ms Khadija Suedi, Ms Zubedeza Addi, Ms Mary Mdee, Ms Kijakasy Feruzi, Ms Anna Gwasa, Ms Kaya Omari, Ms Mgeni Saidi, Ms Zaituni Maola, Ms Lucy Lameck ;

Togo : Ms Trenou Marguerite Thompson, Ms Confort A. Wilson ;

Tunisia : Ms Radhia Haddad, Ms Aicha Bellagha ;

Zanzibar : Ms Martam Mohamed, Ms Aipe Mzee, Ms Khadija Jabir, Ms Msim Abarahamani, Ms Amina Msafiri Ali, Ms Arafa Ame ;

African National Congress (ANC), South Africa : Ms Adélaïde Tambo, Ms Kay Xabanisa, Ms Edith Nowana, Ms Edna Mgbaza

Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), Algeria : Ms Khadija Khadija, Ms Aicha Aicha;

National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), Angola;

Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), Mozambique : Ms Pricilia Nguman, Ms Uria Simango ;

People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Angola : Ms Maria Judith Santos, Ms Maria dos Anjos Nelumba ;

Pan African Congress (PAC), South Africa : Sister Gertrude Mathutha, Ms Tandi Mayisela, Ms Martha Mayisela ;

African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde : Ms Kamara Da Costa, Ms Catherine Turpin ;

South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), South West Africa (present-day Namibia) : Ms Putuse Apollus, Ms Pashukeni Shoombe ;

Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) : Ms Lesabe Tengewe Virginia.

b. Chairpersons of CAF and PAWO

- Ms Jeanne Martin Cissé (Guinea Conakry) from 1962 to 1974 ;
- Ms Ftiha Betahar (Algeria) from 1974 to 1986 ;
- Ms Ruth Neto (Angola) from 1986 to 1997 ;
- Ms Assetou Koité (Senegal), the current Chairperson in office since 1997.

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List of illustrations

Fig.1. Portrait of Taitu Betul (source : *Le Petit Journal*, 29 March 1896).
Public domain

Fig.2. Imaginary portrait of Queen Njinga painted in 1830 by the French painter Achille Devéria. Public domain

Fig.3. Sketch on Kimpa Vita drawn by a Capuchin priest in 1706.
Public domain

Fig.4. Ndete Yalla, lithograph produced by Jacques François Llanta in the 19th century. Illustrations from *Esquisses sénégalaises, Physionomie du pays, Peuplades, Commerce, Religions, Passé et avenir, Récits et légendes* by the Reverend Boilat. Public domain

Fig.5. Yaa Asantewaa in *batakarikese* battle uniform (in an undated photograph). Public domain

Fig.6. Anna Julia Cooper (source : *A Voice from the South*, 1892).
Public domain

Fig.7. Portrait of Charlotte Manye Maxeke. Public domain

Fig.8. Aba women in Nigeria fighting against the British colonialists.
Public domain

Fig.9. Aline Sitoé Diatta. Public domain

Fig.10. Amy Aswood Garvey. Public domain

Fig.11. Portrait of Gisèle Rabasehala photographed in the 1970s.
© Rabesahala photographic collection

Fig.12. Aoua Keita. © Sylvia Serbin

Fig.13. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti on her 70th birthday (24 October 1970).
© Ransome-Kuti photographic collection

Fig.14. N'Kosazana Dlamini Zuma (left) and Irina Bokova (right)
(Paris, UNESCO, 15 November 2012). © UNESCO 2012

African women, Pan-africanism and African renaissance

This document is a follow-up to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), organized at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in November 2012, at the initiative of the Permanent Delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania, the country where PAWO was founded, and the Permanent Delegation of Republic of South Africa, the country which has hosted the Organization since 2008.

Prompted by the success of the celebration and the recommendations of the participants, UNESCO therefore undertook to publish a work highlighting the struggle of African women to liberate the continent from the yoke of colonialism and to assert the values of Pan-Africanism. The endeavours of these women, many in number but little known, bears testimony to women's commitment to assume their role and responsibilities in the future of the continent.

Designed under the general stewardship of the Africa Department of UNESCO, this book will inform as many people as possible, in particular, youth, about African women's role and achievements in the liberation and development of the continent. It also proposes, through a pedagogical approach, to provide a number of markers on the components and influence of Pan-Africanism and its enrichment through African women's contribution to freedom – their own and that of all Africans.

“The 2012 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), held at UNESCO Headquarters and organized jointly by UNESCO and the African Union Commission, reflects the depth of the values that unite us. This book affords a perfect opportunity for us to strengthen and reaffirm our shared commitment to women and to Africa.”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

