

AFRICAN ANTI-ABORTION COALITION

Chidicon Medical Center, No 1 Uratta Road, P. O. Box 302, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria 460242,
Phone 083-231183; 046-660021, email:info@chidicon.com www.chidicon.com/AAAC.html

PRESS RELEASE ON SENATE MEETING ON CEDAW

On 13 November, 2007 the African Anti-Abortion Coalition (AAAC) and other Pro-life Organizations in Nigeria comprising the Association of Concerned Mothers, Abuja and Lagos, National Association for Women's Advancement, Lagos, Happy Home Foundation, Enugu, Human and Family Commission, Plateau state, National Council of Muslim Youths, Abuja, Catholic Women's Association, Project for Human Development, Lagos, Care of the Estranged for Social Development, Lagos, Doctorsdotelife, Lagos, MediaWatch, Secretariat of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, Abuja, under the coordination of Heritage Network met with the Senate Leadership headed by the Senate President - His Excellency Senator David Mark.

1. The main issue of discussion centered on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is a UN convention signed and ratified during the military era when constitutional and legislative processes were suspended, and would become binding on the Federal Republic of Nigeria if it were to be domesticated. Discussants pointed out that even though there are some laudable goals CEDAW seeks to address it remains flawed on major fundamental issues that, would legitimize abortion and contraception in Nigeria. Furthermore, CEDAW would infringe on our national sovereignty by seeking in article 2 (f) "...to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices.... And in 2 (g) to repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women."
2. The Congress of the United States of America has refused to ratify and domesticate this convention because it infringes on her sovereignty and contravenes the Constitution of the US.
3. CEDAW is also at variance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of African Child (1990). CEDAW is a complete break with the traditions and values of Africa by its separation of the well being and the rights of mother from the well being and rights of the child.
4. CEDAW fails to recognize the cultural diversity affecting women's rights in different parts of Nigeria as a multicultural nation. A nation without culture is a nation without identity.
5. CEDAW has a committee empowered to monitor the implementation of the convention in State Parties that have ratified it. Each State Party is obliged to report to this committee every 4 years. The interpretations of the convention and subsequent recommendations of this Committee become binding on State Parties

when they domesticate CEDAW. The General Recommendation 24 of this Committee has interpreted the term “family planning” as contained in Articles 10 (h), 12.1, 14(b) and 16.1 (e) of CEDAW to mean state funded abortion and contraception. If CEDAW is domesticated by the National Assembly, Nigeria will not escape the over-reaching efforts by the CEDAW Committee to impose abortion on our country as an international obligation. To date there are 37 countries that the CEDAW Committee has pressurized to legalize abortion. At the continental level, the MAPUTO protocol seeks to achieve the same result of legalizing abortion. Such international and domestic pressure was at the heart of the last failed attempt to pass the Reproductive Health bill.

6. While recognizing the immense pressure that women with crisis pregnancies face, we wish to categorically state that abortion is violence not only to the unborn child but also to the mother. Nigeria women deserve better than abortion.

7. CEDAW, in Articles 1, 5a and 10c, as part of its focus on ensuring equality between the sexes, seeks to abolish ALL stereotypes in the roles of men and women. This is a position that underlies the issue of gay and lesbian relations and marriage but the Nigerian woman believes in equality but not sameness. She fights for equality but not at the detriment of the family. She cherishes certain positive stereotypes that define her within her culture especially motherhood. CEDAW is on record as reprimanding Belarus for instituting Mothers’ Day as a national holiday, viewing this as a stereotype of women.

8. The Senate leadership expressed interest on hearing further matters on CEDAW. The Senate President underscored that, even though he personally opposes abortion, it would be a matter of conscience for each senator. The effort of the network of Prolife organizations is commendable and points to a growing participation of the people in the democratic process.

9. The African Anti-abortion Coalition presented the Senate Leadership with two letters on **Facts and Figures on the Economics of Contraception Abortion: A Reply to G8 Leaders**; and Letter to the Presidency of the G8 Summit 2007 – **2nd Anniversary of the 2005 Declaration of G8 Africa Action Plan**.

10. The Senate Leadership accepted the submissions and promised to deliberate on the relevant issues raised.

Signed by.:



Prince Dr Philip C. Njemanze MD. AAAC Chairman.