**Solidarity statement Against the Killings of Women, Children, and other Civilians in Cote d’Ivoire’ read by Madame Salimata Porquet, on behalf of West African Women**

His Excellency, President of the Authority of Heads of States and Government of the ECOWAS, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Commander in Chief of Armed Forces,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS member states,

His Excellency, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed,

The women of West Africa appreciate the honour given to us to present this statement to the Heads of State and Government in the region. The privilege you have given portrays your recognition of the important role women play in West African societies.

Women from across West Africa have assembled in Abuja this week to show our intense concern for the escalating situation in Cote d’Ivoire. The killings of the seven women in Abidjan on March 3, 2011 in broad daylight illustrates that the conflict is getting desperate and it is time to intensify our efforts in bringing it to a conclusion.

Civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone have taught us valuable lessons that wars in one country affects us all. We cannot sit idly by and allow our brothers and sisters die. Our fears are that what is unfolding in Cote d’Ivoire is a reminder of the dark days in our region that we should never allow return.

Our region has suffered for too long and its potential should not continue to be truncated by wars. The crises in other parts of the world have gradually overshadowed the problems in Cote d’Ivoire, therefore it lies on Your Excellencies; our leaders and the people of West Africa to seek a peaceful end to the current impasse.

**Your Excellencies, the Heads of State and Government,** the women of West Africa call on you to remain fully engaged on Cote d’Ivoire. The stakes are clearly high, the causalities are increasing and the eventual outcomes might have regional consequences;

**Your Excellencies** should urge all parties in the conflict to prioritize human life and security above political agendas and mandates;

**Your Excellencies should recall that any inaction would contradict your commitment of** moving to an “ECOWAS of Peoples” where citizens in the region have security, freedom of movement and expression

Please remember the **Ivorian 7** and other victims of this conflict in your discussions today. They did not die in vain. Their voices for justice must be heard.

**Finally,**

The women of West Africa want to join your efforts by organising a women-led mediation mission in support of ECOWAS to bring peace back to Cote d’Ivoire.