



PRESS RELEASE:

PROTECT OUR GIRLS, URGES AU ENVOY FOR WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY DURING HER NIGERIA SOLIDARITY MISSION

Abuja, 9 December 2014; The Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Bineta Diop begun her Nigeria solidarity visit yesterday with a simple message, *“protect our girls.”* Speaking when she met members of the *“Bring Back our Girls”* campaign, a group that is advocating for greater global attention to the issue of the abducted Chibok girls, Diop pledged to take their plea for greater support, from AU member states, back to the leadership. *“We have come to show solidarity with the people and Government of Nigeria and in particular with the families of the missing Chibok girls.”*

Bineta Diop was joined by Amb. Diallo Amina Djibo of Niger in Ethiopia, who is also a member of AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) and Justice Sophia Akuffo, former President of the African Court of Human and People’s rights.

Addressing members of the campaign, who gathered at a public park in Abuja, some of whom have been affected by the insurgency in the North, Amb. Djibo said, *“This is an African women’s appeal. We are speaking first and foremost as mothers, whose daughters are missing. We cannot afford to continue ignoring the plight of our missing girls and we must speak out now.”*

The team earlier held talks with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commissioner for Gender and Social Affairs, Fatmata Sow and ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Salamatu Suleiman. The team also held a roundtable meeting with members of the Nigerian Women Peace and security Network.

The purpose of their visit is among others to echo the voices of the women of Nigeria and support them in their efforts to bring to an end the ordeal of the Chibok girls and all other forms of gender based violence. They are also here to support the Government of Nigeria’s efforts to bring back the girls abducted by Boko Haram and galvanize the support of civil society organizations that are assisting the victims. The team is also calling for peaceful elections and for greater participation of women in Nigeria’s political space as a step towards curbing conflicts in the region and ensuring a prosperous future.

“In order to achieve the goal of a peaceful and prosperous Continent, women must be part of that transformation process,” said Diop at the start of her mission, which ends on Friday 12 December.

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