

**Mrs. BENITA DIOP, AU special envoy
On Women, peace and security**



What we have said as women for peace, security and development from both the AU and the UN was listen to the women in Eritrea and the leadership. And what we found is something that we need to echo because we need to change the narrative. I think here we have seen a country that has been resilient despite challenges. A country that has been striving to show the world that it has been working to develop its own economy. A country that has put women as part of its undertakings for development. Speaking with the Head of State of Eritrea we realized that this is normal; Eritrean women fought for liberation and now are on the field working on agriculture and much more in the fight for development.

We at the AU have put in place, along with the UN, programs for young people to connect so that they share their experience and accelerate and innovate. So it will be important to involve young Eritreans as well.

I have been very happy about my visit to Eritrea. I will take the message to the AU but also to my sisters in the African Women's movement. I have actually been to Eritrea during the border war. I, then, met with Mrs. Luul Ghebreamichael and visited the war field. We

visited the displaced camps and young men and women fighting in the war. The disaster of war was heavy but we saw women who stood next to their brothers to defend their nation. We appreciated what the young women were selflessly doing back then; nevertheless, we really hoped for peace. And today, I come back at a time when Eritrea and Ethiopia have made peace I am glad to have been here on this joint mission. I have been in good contacts with several Eritrean women having had a chance to work with them in different contexts. The intergenerational cooperation of the youth and the old working together to build Eritrea is an example for us to learn from.