

**Addis Ababa, 14 November 2012 (WIC)** – West African women leaders this week participated in a United Nations-led conference held in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, to discuss ways to increase women's leadership and involvement in ensuring peace and security in the region.

About 70 leaders representing women's organizations and networks in West Africa, as well as UN agencies and UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions in the region, took part in the two-day event, which was organized by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and ended today.

"It is my hope that this workshop will enable you as women leaders to take an honest look at your strengths and capacities, and to come up with strategies to strengthen your interactions with each other at different levels, national and regional, so that you can serve as serious partners and peace brokers in efforts to sustain regional peace and security," the head of UNMIL, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Karin Landgren, told participants.

In her remarks, which were delivered by her deputy, Ms. Landgren also stressed the importance of regional dialogue to address common peace and security concerns among countries.

At the end of the gathering, participants issued a communiqué with recommendations for UN missions, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), governments and other organizations on how to promote women's participation on peace and security issues in the region.

The recommendations ranged from planning and implementing peace missions that include women mediators and expanding recruitment of women in the security sector, to taking immediate action to highlight the situation of women and girls in Guinea Bissau and Mali. Mentoring programmes and reaching out to young women, as well as knowledge sharing, were also measures suggested by the communiqué.

According to UN News, the Acting Representative of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in Liberia, Elizabeth Lwanga, underscored the importance of women's representation in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. The dialogue, she stressed, provided a welcome opportunity for concrete decisions to accelerate

action on this issue.