

## **Nairobi Symposium closed: Maximizing the Impact of Women in war, peace and security policies in Africa**

The three day symposium on the impact of women in war, peace and security policies in African was brought to a close this evening at Nairobi Crowne Plaza Hotel on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2014.

Speaking during the symposium closure, Ambassador Rachel Omamo, Cabinet Secretary for Defense challenged the women from all around the world to rise up and take their positions in ensuring peace worldwide as nobody will do it for them.

“As you work on your National Action Plans, NAPs, think about the young people. Kenya now have a new constitution with national values and principles. But values and principles are not enough. It is only when you value human life, equality that is when something will change. Let us not be afraid to articulate sound values to our children. Women from Africa, Europe, America, lets rise up. Every day, we will wake up to a better world. Let us now feel defeated, let’s move forward,” she said.

The Cabinet Secretary noted that women can be actors, change makers and ambassadors of hope. She pointed out violent triggers like difficulties in dealing with our diversities, managing our democratic transitions especially during elections and development oriented issues as we scramble for resources.

To reduce conflicts, the Defense Cabinet Secretary noted that we need to have communities come together and dialogue. She urged women to think together and work as teams on their national action plans and ensure that the plans bear fruits.

Former USA Ambassador to Yugoslavia Hunt Swanee challenged the women to think of allies that they could incorporate in their endeavour to implement their actions plans and to end conflicts. She passed the message from the Former USA First Lady and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton: “You are the hope of the world”. She encouraged the women to march forward in their push to ensure peace and security around the world. She concluded her remarks using the words of Mahatma Gandhi, first they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then you win.

Speaking during the closure of the symposium, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Production and Extension) Prof. Lucy Irungu who was represented by Director, Board of Post Graduate Studies, Prof. Eunice W. Mutitu, noted that the academia can play its rightful role of research. Using the appropriate data on women activities during conflicts, research studies can be carried out to get the trends of how best women can take their rightful roles in ending conflicts. She noted that the challenges associated with research and NAPs implementation is lack of funds. The only way to overcome these challenges is by creating awareness and vigorous lobbying.

“We need discussions on the role of women in peace and security,” she said. She concluded by saying that the need for research on gender issues is not negotiable.

Prof. Mutitu noted that it was great to see women from all the countries of the world. She encouraged women to network widely in order to grow and to ensure the success of the national action plans (NAPs).