



## The Work of the Civil Society in the Field of Gender Equality and Biodiversity

**Ms Rosalie Ouoba,**

**Support Network for Women from Rural Areas in West Africa and Chad, Burkina Faso**

From this experience Ms Ouoba suggested that it is the duty of the international community to ensure that rural women are directly involved in the implementation of the Beijing decisions and that rural women are trained and supported so they are able to fully participate in local, national and international processes in the future.

Ms Ouoba introduced the *Support Network for Women from Rural Areas in West Africa and Chad* by explaining where and why the network has been created. After participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Ms Ouoba realized that women from rural areas were not very well represented, but that many decisions directly impacting their lives had been reached on their behalf without any consultation with them. From this experience Ms Ouoba suggested that it is the duty of the international community to ensure that rural women are directly involved in the implementation of the Beijing decisions and that rural women are trained and supported so they are able to fully participate in local, national and international processes in the future.

The aim of the *Support Network for Women from Rural Areas in West Africa and Chad* is to develop the capacity of rural women through the creation of networks and associations which encourage women to discuss, train and communicate on a variety of biodiversity issues - from rural agricultural land use and community gender politics to using information communication technologies (ICT) - to

enhance their existing capabilities through global knowledge sharing. The Network's goal is to create solidarity between rural women all over West Africa and Chad, and in doing so, to create an open dialogue to share knowledge and skills whilst enhancing women's self-confidence, awareness of gender equality issues and their ability to become involved in decision-making at all levels.

Ms Ouoba suggested that the achievements of the network are apparent in the changed attitudes of women who are more self-confident, more involved in decision-making within their communities and implementing more diverse agricultural methods and using improved agricultural technology. The networks have also given the rural women the opportunity to become involved in other activities, such as study trips, regional meetings and further ICT training programmes. The use of these networks has enhanced the communication and solidarity between rural women. In doing so, women have been encouraged to learn and use sustainable biodiversity approaches to agriculture in their own communities which in turn has improved their self-confidence.