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To the CODESA Management Committee:

I write in response to your request for comments and suggestions from members of the public regarding the composition and agenda of the CODESA working groups.

As you know, the Declaration of Intent formulated by CODESA participants affirms a commitment to the creation of a democratic South Africa free of all forms of discrimination and governed by a constitution which protects the rights of women.

It has come to my attention that there are very few women participants in the decision making bodies of CODESA. In my view, if the decisions and actions taken by CODESA are intended to represent the aspirations of a majority of South Africans, the needs, views and ideas of women must be taken into account at every stage of the negotiation process. Women represent 30% of the South African population and in many respects, their experiences and concerns differ from those of men.

In the interest of ensuring that the CODESA process is representative and legitimate, I offer the following suggestion:

That a CODESA Gender Review Committee be constituted and charged with the following responsibilities:

1. To consider the briefs of each of the working group with regard to their potential impact on women, and to make recommendations with regard to issues which need to be raised to ensure that all deliberations reflect gender awareness.

2. To review the decisions of all working groups with regard to their projected impact upon women. Working Groups should be required to consider the recommendations of the Gender Review Committee before making final decisions.

The Gender Review Committee should be comprised of two representatives from each party who are selected on the basis of demonstrated interest and experience in gender issues.

I look forward to notification of your response to this proposal.

Yours sincerely

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