



**COMITÉ DE LA CONDITION DE LA FEMME  
COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 61ST SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Delivered by  
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**19 April 2005**

***Item 19: Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation  
In the Field of Human Rights***

**This is a joint statement of the following coalition members of the Geneva-based NGO Committee on the Status of Women of the Conference of NGOs (CONGO): International Federation of University Women, Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's International Association, International Council of Women, Inter-African Committee, Women's International Zionist Organization, International Alliance of Women, Femmes Africa Solidarite, International Council of Jewish Women, Women's Federation for World Peace, Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University and International Business and Professional Women.**

Mr. Chairperson,

Timeliness in identifying issues and recent developments are crucial to the effectiveness of meeting crisis situations, act as early warning mechanisms and focus on preventive diplomacy. The technical cooperation and advisory services of the Office of the High Commissioner are two essential means of action in this regard. It is all the more critical within the reform process of the United Nations such as the Peace Building Commission. As the expert body of the UN in the field of human rights, it has a valuable role in responding to a growing need for institutions that would have a strategy, a vision and a greater policy focus designed to assist, at country level, the setting up of human rights promotion and protection systems. This implies an expanded activity of the Office of the High Commissioner for a more a coherent and integrated approach with other UN bodies and with NGOs and the civil society. This also means building the capacity of its human resources which would require regular budget resources at a sustainable level.

From the perspective of gender, considering that as half the population, women have not been given their equitable share in opportunities, choices and access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, it is imperative that women are included as beneficiaries of technical advisory services and technical assistance to promote the advancement of their status through training and capacity building and that protection and promotion of women's human rights are not focused on their vulnerability alone but on their empowerment such as equal ownership of, access to and control over land and equal rights to own property, adequate housing and entrepreneurship development; focus on affirmative action to favour girls' entry in primary and secondary education and to non-traditional female higher and technical studies and to women's participation at the negotiating table in matters of peace and security. .

We also recommend that in the process, increased recruitment of women as experts notably in treaty bodies and special procedures be promoted, recalling the conclusion in para 57 of the Secretary-General's Report on Item 12 "Experience has shown that women offer a valuable perspective when they are elected to human rights treaty bodies as expert members.

In designing projects and in evaluation missions, we propose that NGO experts be included in order to have an activist perspective, especially since women NGOs have the added value of networking with grassroots women who have pragmatic experience on the ground and a rich multidisciplinary source of knowledge.

We believe that technical advisory services and assistance are building blocks for human rights mechanisms that would strengthen and enhance the credibility of the Commission on Human Rights, provided recipients of assistance have the political will and provided with financial and human resources to make them sustainable.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, it is the sad experience of institutions for gender equality and women's rights that very often, because these are created or set up according to the decision of the political will of the government in power, they also disappear or are downscaled when a new political power takes over which does not have gender equality as its priority. It is therefore essential that these structures have constitutional legitimacy to remain as permanent, independent bodies which are not prone to be overhauled, modified or simply disappear whenever political changes or takeovers by political powers occur. These gender equality infrastructures should be financially sound, transparent, dynamic and should be able to stand the tides of time.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.