



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

Delivered by
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Item 18: Effective functioning of human right mechanisms

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.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2, it has been concluded that gender mainstreaming efforts are still not a systematic part of all policies and programmes including human rights activities. We fully agree with the Secretary General's Report on Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective (E/CN.4/2005/69) that "emphasis must be placed on improving the effectiveness of gender focal points and increasing capacity for gender analysis. It is particularly crucial that such focal points are involved in policy formulation and not only limited to administrative tasks. Without proper training for all human rights staff, in gender analysis and mainstreaming and the inclusion of staff with gender expertise on all teams, it will be difficult to fully realize the goals of gender mainstreaming. Capacity building programmes are equally necessary for human right mechanisms of governments as well as NGOs which are not specialized in the techniques and processes of mainstreaming gender equality. There must be a political will and adequate financial and human resources to effectively implement such programmes. Training is especially needed to identify the root causes of gender discrimination from a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the multiple roles of women and the intersectionality of gender, race, culture and religion. and the denial of women's participation in decision-making machineries where their lives in society are affected.

Education on women's human rights for humanitarian workers will ensure that a wider and more encompassing monitoring framework is put in place to complement the work of the mandate holders.

We are pleased to note that there has been an increase among mandate holders of special procedures to include a gender perspective and to address women's human rights in country situations. We have observed, nevertheless that these remain generally welfare related or oriented to protection from violation of socio-cultural rights, with less emphasis on promoting women's economic and political empowerment and equal rights in strategic decision-making at all levels.

We are convinced that special procedures have a critical role to play in helping to attain the goal of mainstreaming a gender equal perspective in the Commission on Human Rights and its Subcommission as well as in other functional commissions and treaty bodies. By systematically addressing gender equality and specific violations of women's rights in each of their respective mandates and bringing forth best practices, the Commission will necessarily look at all the agenda items with a gender equality lens. At present, there is a tendency to concentrate interventions and discussions on gender mainstreaming and the integration of gender equality perspective under Item 12. .

Another effective mechanism is the provision of space for platforms such as international fora, regional seminars and outreach by working groups and special procedures where governments, women's NGOs and specialists meet. Such special events would contribute to the clarification of issues, solve problems and meet challenges of controversial nature as well as provide innovative solutions and add value. In this regard we are disappointed that the percentage of women participants at meetings of national human rights institutions such as the one organized by the OHCHR in 2002-2004 was quite low, which ranged between 13 and 32 per cent, while women tended to participate more when meetings focused on women-related issues. We urge that proactive measures be taken by the OHCHR, governmental and international bodies to obtain a balanced presence of women especially in human rights institutions. To this end, greater efforts should be made to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated information on rates in training, seminars and workshops, panel discussions and other meetings and bring these to the attention of the Commission on a regular and continuous basis as a way of monitoring and ensuring gender balance.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.