

SECOND SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
JOINT STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM ON OP6 MANDATES OF SPECIAL
PROCEDURES, 3 October 2006
Delivered by Conchita Poncini, (International Federation of University Women)

This is a joint statement of the following 17 NGOs: International Federation of University Women, Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association International, Women's International Zionist Organisation, Women's World Summit Foundation, International Council of Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Zonta International, World Organization for Women, Women's Federation for World Peace International, African Commission on Health Promotion and Human Rights, International Alliance of Women, Solar Cookers International, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Women's Rights Action Watch, World Movement of Mothers, World Union of Catholic Women's Organisation, Inter-African Committee

Since the creation of the United Nations and the adoption of the Universal Declaration and Bill of Human Rights, women have been struggling for the promotion and protection of their rights. The Vienna Declaration provided the legal framework that clearly acknowledge women's rights are human rights and should be integrated into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activities. It emphasized the elimination of all forms of violence against women in public and private life and the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, both hidden and overt.

The implementation of existing international legal instruments has been undermined due to such factors as the practice of patriarchal cultures, customs and religious extremism. Social, economic and cultural forces often determine people's behaviour more than legal regulations, especially for those whose illiteracy denies them access to legal information. Often women's right to life is violated because they challenge either political systems or traditional gender-based standards of behaviour in their workplace, or in socio-cultural or religious settings.

It is essential that all mandates of Special Procedures include a gender equal perspective as a prescriptive concept and to test for gender bias by asking the question "Does a woman compared to a man have a choice and access to a given situation?" In this regard, Special Procedures (SP) should include gender-specific awareness raising, sensitivity factors, impact assessment benchmarks and evaluation measures with time lines. Much of the failure to redress gender inequality is in fact primarily due to gap in systematic sex and age disaggregated national statistics that identify characteristics and practices of human rights violations or lack of empowerment opportunities or equal treatment specific to or primarily directed against women or to which women are particularly vulnerable.

Human rights treaty bodies have all developed procedural rules, guidelines and legal commentaries which should assist the Human Rights Council in preparing its own analysis and review of Special Procedures.

Finally, gender-balanced participation in all review mechanisms such as the Special Procedures, is fundamental in guaranteeing coherence and impartial enforcement of international instruments in general.

Thank you for your consideration.
conchita.poncini@bluewin.ch 3 oct. 06