

ITEM 8 – FOLLOW UP TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

(Interactive Dialogue with the Panel on Gender Perspective in the work of the Human Rights) 20 Sept. 2007

JOINT STATEMENT of 14 NGOs delivered by Conchita Poncini, International Federation of University Women on behalf of: International Federation of University Women, Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Women's International Zionist Organisation, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Zonta International,, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Worldwide Women's Organisation, Agence des Cités Pour la Coopération Nord-Sud, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, Anglican Consultative Council, Bangwe Dialogue, International Council of Women, Women's World Summit Foundation.

1. We have an abundance of international principles and norms calling for mainstreaming gender equality in all areas. Yet there is a dearth of information on national legislation and practice that have gender-based discrimination because of the use of wrong terminologies or simple manipulation of language. There are also practices that *prima facie* are gender neutral, but when examined with an equality lens, one could identify protection or promotion gaps. To illustrate, a woman doing the same work as a man next to her receives lower wages simply because the classification of her job falls within the unskilled category while her male co-worker's job classification falls in the category of specialised skill. Would the panel consider that the appointment of a special rapporteur on Gender Justice be advisable to examine legislation with a view to identifying such gender discriminatory clauses that impede the realisation and enjoyment of equal rights of women and men in all spheres of life?
2. Gender equal perspective in the UPR should be scrupulously respected by a systemic method of gathering and reviewing data and information disaggregated by sex and age.
3. The importance of a two-pronged approach, one towards gender equality mainstreaming as an institutional process and the other on specific women's rights cannot be overlooked because if one takes only a gender perspective, women's reproductive role as a contribution to social and economic development would not be recognised as a responsibility of society to protect and to stimulate in the same manner as military service of men. Using models of best practices are a way to promoting on the one hand gender equality and on the other hand substantive women's rights. Example is legislation on parental leave in Nordic countries based on the "choose or lose" principle which are non-transferable rights that encourage equal sharing of family and work responsibilities;
4. The Commission on Human Rights had a standing agenda item on gender integration into all the UN system from a human rights-based approach. This is an institutional guarantee to ensure a gender equal perspective in all the sessions of the Council throughout the year. It needs however an accountability system where a chart is established to trace quantitative and qualitative progress or slippage accompanied by some form of sanction or reward, otherwise the exercise will remain a lip service and absence of a political will. We highly recommend that such a panel becomes a regular feature in the Council as an impact assessment tool.
5. It is not enough to have a gender balance composition in the Special Procedures, Expert Advisory Services or the UPR and Complaints Procedure. Mandate holders have to have empathy and not mere sympathy. For this to be ensured, some technical gender awareness and sensitivity training have to be provided to mandate holders in particular to those mandates where one can immediately determine gender discrimination. How would the panel see this capacity building exercise taking place? Would you suggest collective training to stimulate raising innovative ideas and questions. I propose that the Office of the High Commissioner be charged with looking at what methods by UN bodies and specialised agencies have been proven successful, e.g. ILO, UNFPA, WFP, UNIFEM, UNICEF.
