



International Advocacy Reports and Statements

Statement to the General Segment of the Durban Review Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance Geneva, 23 April 2009

Delivered by Conchita Poncini, Coordinator of Geneva UN Representatives

As one of the earliest advocates in the UN on women's human rights, the International Federation of University women has observed over the years that the most controversial issues which have to be tackled are those based on multiple forms of discrimination that intersects with gender, such as race, ethnicity, culture and traditions that have led to stereotypes and customary laws, religious beliefs, moral values and inter-generational discrimination based on age. Precisely because these forms are linked to patriarchal societies, women of all ages and levels of society are especially sensitive and vulnerable victims of multiple discriminations based simply on the fact that they are female.

While progress is noticeable in legislation of the more advanced and democratic societies, many forms of indirect discrimination persist in practice in the political arena, at the workplace, in educational institutions, in religious rites and in the media. The Outcome Document just adopted has still several gender gaps; nevertheless it has the basis for multilateral action and international cooperation. We are firmly convinced that the United Nations system has and could continue to play an instrumental role in monitoring its implementation through the various treaty bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council, including through the universal periodic review. The document also provides an educational framework that stresses the right to freedom of opinion and expression as one of the essential foundations of a democratic, pluralistic society that appreciates the diversity of cultural specificities and peaceful co-existence.

Finally as a global women's organization in 80 countries, IFUW believes that no society can fully develop if legislation and entrenched customs and habits prevent women from participating in the shaping of their society's future, if children grow up in believing that giving privileges to some and limiting the rights of others is permissible. Education is the tool that can give the power to understand, to differentiate, to progress and to achieve in building self-confidence and exercise tolerance and compassion..

Thank you President.

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