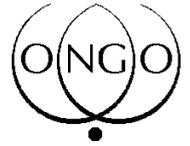




GENEVA ADVOCACY NOTES



July 2006

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

EDITORIAL

It is an opportune time that the 2006 first volume of the Geneva Advocacy Notes is being issued during the period when three important conferences within the United Nations System are taking place in one location in the City of Geneva. It is also timely as the Commission on Human Rights ends its sixty years of existence and is replaced by the Human Rights Council to restore credibility of the UN organ charged with the promotion and protection of individual and collective human rights. We have within our reach the progress reports, statements and spontaneous oral interventions to enable comparative analyses of how governments are mainstreaming gender equality perspectives and how they look at women's human rights in a sustainable and coherent manner, 11 years after the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

The ILO annual conference in June focused the Director General's Report on Changing Patterns of Work in the World of Work. For the first time in an official report, the ILO has acknowledged that "the term "work" embraces both paid work and the unpaid productive and reproductive work mostly carried out by women". It mainstreamed throughout the report the gender dimension, highlighting where and how women-specific patterns of work continue being disadvantaged by their very low level of employment and inequality at work. Its Decent Work Agenda, which has become a global agenda, has also mainstreamed gender equality.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The Human Rights Council (HRC) erstwhile the Commission on Human Rights has concentrated its inaugural work on procedures, methods and programme of work, based on the mandate by the UN General Assembly (GA) in Resolution A60/251. As the mandate had not specified mainstreaming gender equality perspectives, delegates have rarely mentioned the process of gender mainstreaming to improve women's status and empower them. Statements rather stressed women as vulnerable victims of human rights violation. A welcome initiative by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland,

Micheline Calmy-Rey, was the drafting of a Statement on the Participation of Women in Political Life signed by Women Ministers of Foreign Affairs and High Officials attending the HRC high level segment. Attention is called to the agenda of the former Commission on Human Rights, under Item 12 on Integrating Women's Human Rights and Mainstreaming Gender Equality throughout the UN System. This must be maintained and upheld its inclusion in the regular agenda of the HRC when it meets from 18 September to 6 October 2006, *inter alia*, to define what should be its future Agenda. We have a number of legally binding international instruments and regulatory framework, declarations at world conferences and voluntary pledges to back up our advocacy strategies, namely: the Universal Bill of Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Declarations and Programmes of Action committed in the UN World Conferences in Rio (1992) under Agenda 21; the Vienna Conference on Human Rights (1993 which reaffirmed that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights"; the International Conference on Population Development affirming women's reproductive rights (1994); the Copenhagen Social Summit (1995) on economic and social empowerment of women; the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) enumerating 12 Critical Areas of Concern and serves as the blueprint of women's rights and empowerment. The 5 and 10-year reviews in 2000 and 2005 respectively, reaffirming commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In 2004, another initiative of *Minister Calmy Rey* was to convene the women Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other Ministers, which produced a Declaration on Violence Against Women, notably domestic violence. To ensure implementation and monitoring, it is critical that the mandates of Special Rapporteurs on Violence Against Women and Trafficking of Women and Girls as well as the incumbent mandate holders be extended beyond the one year initial extension provided in Res. A60/251. *Yakin Erturk*, Special Rapporteur of the HRC on Violence Against Women conducted a fact-finding mission in the Netherlands from 2-11 July. She focused on domestic violence, violence against women in the context of human trafficking and prostitution. She intends to present a report on her findings.

SOCIAL FORUM, 3-4 AUGUST 2006

The Social Forum, an initiative of the Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, will hold its fourth session on 3-4 August. The theme will be *The fight against poverty and the right to participation: the role of women*. Three sub-themes for consideration are: (a) general trend of feminization of poverty throughout the world. The panel will include representatives of women living in poverty, NGOs working with them in both developing and developed countries; (b) women and employment and (c) participation of women in decision-making processes – at home, at the community level and at the national level. The panel will explore the various challenges to addressing gender equality in labour and employment in particular in the informal economy and the quantification of unpaid labour. Panelists will also share best practices. Recommendations will focus on suggestions for concrete ways to make progress towards poverty reduction strategies conducive to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The report containing conclusions and recommendations will be submitted to the Sub-Commission at its next session 31 July to 21 August. There will also be a fourth panel on the *Discussion of the Report on Implementation of existing human rights norms and standards in the context of the fight against extreme poverty*. A fifth session in plenary will provide *Vision and recommendations for future expert advice to the Human Rights Council*. The formulation of this will come from an exchange among members of the Social Forum, the Sub-Commission, and NGOs cooperating with the Social Forum.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in sharp contrast to the HRC, had in its substantive agenda *Mainstreaming a gender equal perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system with sub-item on Women and Development in the Economic and Environmental questions and a sub-item on the Advancement of Women in the Social and Human Rights questions*. It also has reported on country level programming and future action. Statements have called for gender balance of regional coordinators and country level personnel. It also had a formal panel during the segment on Humanitarian Affairs entitled *Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Emergencies*.

The Humanitarian Segment of ECOSOC completed its work on 18 July 2006 with a unanimous resolution (E/2006/L.13) on Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. This is a very significant resolution for women as it explicitly “welcomed” the panel on Gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies which addressed, among others, chronic underfunding be they in human-made conflicts or in natural disasters, in tangible terms, the impact of under-funding on beneficiaries.

In the closing statement of Jan Egeland, Emergency Relief Coordinator and UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, he underscored the shocking stories of gender-based violence and called on collective and individual

responsibilities to prevent and to give support to victims and bring about social change. He said the dialogue will continue with the hope of arriving on a common agreement on what constitutes gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies, not to create parallel legal structures but to increase collective efforts. He also said there would be a mid-year review of the 2006 Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal in the next ECOSOC session, reporting on significant shortfalls in key appeals such as the \$20 billion investment to solve a \$200 billion problem.

A High Level Ministerial Declaration has highlighted in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 the determination to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; violence against women and girls as serious obstacle to the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all and reaffirmation of commitment to implement strategies and policies including targeted measures to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls; underlined the need for the consistent use of a gender mainstreaming strategy for creating an enabling environment for women’s participation in development.

PARALLEL MEETING TO ECOSOC ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The UN Division for the Advance of Women in New York organized a panel on Mainstreaming Gender Equality. Highlights of the meeting included: the need to have a life cycle approach and should involve men. From the floor, a comment was made that men were complacent in principle in getting involved because they felt there was adequacy of legislation; It would take generations to change mindsets and behaviour. Leaders are important determinants in not couching the role of women in welfare terms but to use both women and men on equal terms in setting up safety nets and proactive legislations; NGOs, civil society notably women’s groups have brought to light that the most difficult obstacles are religion, cultural relativism, the traditional division of labour, and absence of property rights for women; We need to exchange information through different forums to build political clout such as gender budgeting. International financial institutions and economic forums are now using gender data to fill the measuring gaps; Entrepreneurship development of grassroots women should include capacity building in quality control of products and financing of small and medium enterprises; Token women in decision-making are often made visible in discourse on women’s leadership participation; Good practices should be used but adapted to local settings; A gender balance is necessary to have a cross fertilization of ideas; Young and competent women should dare to enter the political scene; We need more women leaders especially “First” leaders to champion the cause of women. Education of girls and the force of law as well as labeling equal opportunity enterprises should be promoted to boost pride in corporate culture.

The Permanent Mission of Mexico has tabled a draft resolution on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the UN system which will be presented to the ECOSOC in Plenary.

PANELS ORGANISED BY NGO CSW AND ITS WORKING GROUPS

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women organized a panel during ECOSOC on Women in Power Climbing the Political Ladder. Chairing was Edith Ballantyne (WILPF). Panelist Heli Bathijah (WHO) presented the case of Finland: 100 Years of the Right to Vote and the Right to Work; Susi Snyder (WILPF) spoke on Women's Economic Power and Peace Building; Conchita Poncini (IFUW) made a powerpoint presentation on Women's Perspectives on Productive Employment; Ronald Barnes addressed the issue of Indigenous People, Sustainable Employment; and Sajida Ally (Migrant Rights International) on Global Migration for Livelihoods.

The Working Group on Women in Employment and Economic Development held a workshop on Decent Work, Women's Perspectives, within the Civil Society Forum organized by CONGO in conjunction with the ECOSOC Substantive Session held in Geneva 3-28 July. The meeting was a very interactive one with speakers as resource persons, giving a brief background and asking the questions while the audience provided answers, comments or follow up questions. The speakers were Evy Messel, Director of the Gender Bureau of the ILO, Ewa Zimny, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Gender Focal Point, Krishna Ahooja Patel, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Claire de Lavernette, World Movement of Mothers. The Rapporteur was Ursula Barter Hemmerich and Moderator Conchita Poncini (IFUW). The workshop contributed recommendations which were incorporated in the overall Declaration and Recommendations of the CS Forum transmitted to the ECOSOC for consideration and inclusion in the High Level Ministerial Declaration on "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development."

The following is full text of the recommendations. (See Entire recommendations of the CS Form in the CONGO website www.ngocongo.org)

Addressing Equality of Opportunities for Women, Youth, and Older People

Recommendation 1. Work is the engine of economic growth and investment in capabilities of women and men is vital to generating decent and productive work for all women and men. It should be the central objective of national and international development policies.

Recommendation 2. Productive and decent employment is critical to lift people out of poverty, and as women constitute 70% of the world's absolute poor, and 60% of its working

poor, equality of opportunity for women is key to achieving a just society.

Recommendation 3. The concept of women as part of a vulnerable minority should be discarded and replaced by a development model based on the added value of women as actors and catalysts of change.

Recommendation 4. Governments should recognize the economic value of home based care-givers' work which is unpaid and undervalued – HIV/AIDS has resulted in girls leaving school to provide care.

Recommendation 5. Civil society and trade unions advocate for family friendly business environment as a critical element of socially responsible enterprises – overcome negative rating of protective legislation by employers.

Recommendation 6. Governments and the private sector should provide an enabling environment which includes safety nets, extending national security and insurance schemes, health care and child care facilities to cover women including in the informal economy. In this regard, a model of good practice is the Bangladesh Grameen Bank where it was realised that sickness could impede repayment of loans. Thus it was decided to set up an insurance system with nominal fees offering access to minimum basic health care and affordable generic medicines.

Recommendation 7. Concerning sharing and reconciliation of paid work and family responsibilities, governments and private enterprises should encourage shared working arrangements that would apply to both women and men at all levels including chief executive officers (CEOs). It would also foster a new solidarity between generations. One example of good practice is gender budgeting to ensure that the productive and reproductive work of women get their equitable share of economic growth and not merely shown as social expenditures.

Recommendation 8. Governments should commit to achieving gender equality through the empowerment of women by guaranteeing women's economic rights and independence. Governments, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs should involve women at all levels of decision-making.

Recommendation 9. Governments must pay particular attention to education and training for women to ensure equal opportunity to decent work, recognizing the fact that young women are more disadvantaged than young men. In this regard, policy measure should address the eradication of illiteracy and the insertion of young migrant workers into the labor market.

Recommendation 10. With regard to training and capacity building, governments should target women who are particularly affected by economic restructuring and high levels of unemployment and therefore discouraged to look for decent work. Rising prices and deterioration in quality and quantity of key social services such as child care formerly provided by the state in transition economies in order to facilitate full time care at home of small children, have made it economically

unattractive for women to remain in the labour force and have encouraged women to carry out themselves household chores and engage in family enterprises or underground work to make both ends meet.

Recommendation 11. Ministries of Finance, Economy and Trade should take into account the social dimensions inherent in gender equality for sustainable development. They should be involved with other ministries such as Labour, Health and Education in order to have a holistic view that would reconcile the economic and the social aspects of decent work for women and gender equality principles. Entitlement and access to productive resources (credit and venture capital) as well as access to markets and business opportunities are necessary to increase women's competitiveness, and economic independence. Mainstreaming gender perspectives in economic and trade policies is a not a zero-sum game but a value-added to sustainable growth and development and creating decent work for all. Women should be involved at all levels of macro and micro levels of economic decision-making in order to ensure equitable distribution of accumulated wealth.

Recommendation 12. Ensure the active participation of women in trade unions at all levels of decision-making including in social dialogue and collective negotiations.

Recommendation 13. National Governments should provide for systematic gathering of gender and age disaggregated statistics and measurements of the economic contribution of unremunerated family and household work. A good example of this is the statistical measurements and guidelines for the population censuses and European statisticians.

Recommendation 14. The general ageing of the population in industrialised countries has stigmatised retirement, leaving older persons in a position of dependency. It is important that the voluntary and caring work of older persons, especially women, be recognised.

Recommendation 15. Nordic countries have proved that by supporting families and child care facilities and programmes, birth rates have increased while helping women to enter decent income earning work. Such best practice should be used as a model in other industrialised countries that are finding a decrease in the active population.

Recommendation 16. Governments should fully implement international standards on gender equality, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and ILO's Gender Equality Conventions in efforts to provide decent work and decent career opportunities to women, including, when necessary, affirmative action in order for women to reach political and economic policy and decision making positions.

In March, on the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Working Group on « Women Changing the World », organized a meeting intended for the local community to build together a world of peace and equality. Five Working Groups of the NGO CSW presented their respective work in progress: Women in Employment and Economic Development; Women

and Peace, Violence Against Women, the Girl Child and Health and Human Rights. In the question and answer session, many individuals expressed desire to have follow up meetings. Three meetings were held thereafter.

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What is the "Geneva Advocacy Notes"?

The newsletter reports on events of importance to women taking place at the United Nations, its specialized agencies and NGOs in Geneva. Published periodically by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva, its aim is to encourage NGOs and women and men everywhere to commit themselves to the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, advancement of the status of women and the achievement of gender equality. Reproduction and dissemination to other interested organizations, networks and individuals are encouraged and source acknowledged. Content is the sole responsibility of the Editorial Committee. .

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