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TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE  
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ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF PORTUGAL  
GENEVA



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



AT THE 21ST SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, THE PERMANENT MISSIONS OF FINLAND, MOROCCO, PERU, PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND THAILAND ARE REQUESTING THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY IN A SIDE-EVENT ON:

# EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

12 SEPTEMBER 2012 • 13:00-15:00 • ROOM XXI, PALAIS DES NATIONS



## IN COLLABORATION WITH: NGO COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN / WORLD YWCA

### BACKGROUND

Women's contribution to the decision-making processes both at local, national and international level is essential for our societies to progress in a more positive and democratic direction. However, women actively pursuing to participate and influence often face barriers made of discriminatory legislation and practices that put them in an unequal position in comparison with men.

The inequality in the sphere of economic, social and cultural rights that women and girls experience makes them especially vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse, and poverty. While women make up more than half the world's population, according to some estimates they represent 70 percent of the world's poor. This is due to the systematic discrimination women face in education, health care, employment and control of assets. It is also a consequence of not having an equal role in decision-making.

Because of discrimination and poverty women are often being left without even basic rights such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation, medical care, education, decent employment and social security. Gender concerns remain largely ignored, even when social protection schemes specifically target women within households or female-headed households. The channeling of social protection to women may amplify the impacts of certain schemes reaching children or older persons, but it does not ensure that the root causes of gender inequality are adequately addressed.

Women don't need just protection but at root non-discrimination and substantive equality in legal, political and economic terms. This requires justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights and efficient implementation of the obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. For women to change their lives, they need equal access to and control of economic resources and political power; they need a possibility of being full and active members of society who speak out, run for office, and support themselves and their families.

Women's empowerment is essential for everyone; it is a fundamental prerequisite in the achievement of sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals and in the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights to everyone without discrimination.

### AUDIENCE

Governmental representatives, staff of UN agencies and bodies, Human Rights NGOs, representatives of civil society attending the HRC

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To highlight the importance of the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights of women as means to enhance the advancement of women, women's rights and gender equality
- ▶ To present views on how the ESCR of women can result in poverty reduction, sustainable development and in achieving the MDG's as well as in preventing all forms violence against women
- ▶ To demonstrate how the engagement of the CEDAW and the ESCR Committee in ESCR can play significant role in the empowerment of women by addressing the barriers faced by women in the fields of economic, social and cultural rights

### PANELLISTS

Ms. Laura DUPUY LASSERRE, President of the Human Rights Council (Chair, Moderator)

Ms. Kyung-wha KANG, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (Opening statement)

Ms. Magdalena SEPULVEDA, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty

Mr. Niklas BRUUN, Member of the CEDAW Committee

Ms. Ruth Abril Stoffels, Professor of International Law and International Relations, specialised in gender issues, Cardenal Herrera CEU University

Ms. Nyaradzai GUMBONZVANDA, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women and General Secretary of YWCA

Refreshments and sandwiches will be served as of 13:00.