



ANNUAL SESSION ON THE INTEGRATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE WORK OF
THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AS INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE: FROM POLICY TO ACTION

26 SEPTEMBER 2011: PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA; SWITZERLAND

The World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA); the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Femme Afrique Solidarite (FAS); organisations with over a century of work on women's rights, empowerment, peace and justice; both being in consultative status with the United Nations, and members of the NGO CSW, Geneva; we commend the Human Rights Council for the systematic implementation of its Resolution 6/30. This Resolution establishes this important practice and good precedent, setting aside quality plenary time for mainstreaming gender perspectives as part of the modalities of work of the Human Rights Council.

The World YWCA, WILPF and FAS recognizes the far-reaching benefits of the mainstreaming of gender perspective into the work of the Human Rights Council, and especially emphasis this year of moving from policy to action. These include an empowering practice and approach that addresses human rights issues from a position of both men and women and that the institutions of human rights must in themselves have the capacity, the tools and the practices that advance gender equality. It means understanding that women face often invisible barriers to advancement and that the realities of women's lives must be factored in to change the way we design institutions. It is not easy because what it actually means in practice requires a revolution in the way we approach, interpret and apply human rights.

CEDAW General Recommendation on Women and Conflict: We welcome the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW)'s work around a **General Recommendation on Women and Conflict**. We encourage the Human Rights Council, member states and partners to support this effort as part of mainstreaming women, peace and security of women, thus implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325, within the work of this HRC. This will offer the much-needed guidance in specific country situations.

For instance the Security Council recently adopted a Resolution on Libya, which: *"Emphasises the importance of promoting the equal and full participation of women and minority communities in the discussions related to the political process in the post-conflict phase"*.

This is a call which is in line with the spirit of CEDAW that requires member states to take all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women in relation to their

participation in public life, thus providing the much needed guidance on issues such as : How women's participation be facilitated? How are their rights as victims of conflict protected as they seek such participation? What are the actions in place to address gender justice issues?

What guarantees will be given for women's rights? What measures will ensure women's representation in the judiciary and in other areas of public life? In context of limited resources, will post crisis budgets priorities actions that protect and promote women's rights? What long term steps will be taken (as in article 5 CEDAW) to counter stereotypes about women and their roles in life?

Universal Periodic Reviews: We recognize the importance of the **Universal Periodic Review** as established by the Human Rights Council to support, strengthen and provide guidance to member states on the status of human rights in their countries. We request for increased support for greater inclusion of a gender perspective, scrutiny and integration of women's human rights issues in this process. We further encourage the increase for financial and technical support to enable effective participation of women, and especially women's rights advocates in such processes. The UPR process further provides an opportunity for building greater coherence with the regional normative standards on human rights including on women's human rights.

For example, as Zimbabwe presents its report to the Human Rights Council under the UPR process this October, this strategic opportunity for deepening the link on women's human rights and gender perspectives with both the African Protocol to the Charter on Women's Human Rights in Africa; the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. What actions is the country taking to integrate a gender perspective and women's human rights within the on-going constitutional review process; and what support can the HRC, and other partners provide to ensure a positive election process that protects the rights of citizens. This is the practical example of how mainstreaming gender perspective has positive impacts to women and girls in communities.

Human Rights Council Resolutions on Violence Against Women: The World YWCA , WiLPP and FAS commends the Human Rights Council and especially the member states, such as Canada, Colombia, Switzerland, South Africa, Australia among others who have been supporting the annual Resolution on violence against women. We are looking forward to working closely with member states and women and civil society organisations in the preparation of the 2012 Resolution on violence against women and its special focus on remedies.

In Conclusion:

We value our close collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, especially the Women's Division, and the Treaty Bodies Office in taking this work forward. Through the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva, in our collaboration with UN Women we call for a stronger engagement on the normative work on women dialogue today greatly contributes to. The real meaning of our collective effort is indeed measured when all women enjoy their human rights and live safe and secure lives in their families and communities.