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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by the Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2008/1.



Statement

The Anglican Communion and its Faith Perspective

The Anglican Communion (“Communion”) consists of 75 million Christians from 165 countries worldwide. More than half our members are women and girls who are especially grieved by the harsh consequences of conflict, poverty, violence, discrimination and the unexpected traumas of poorly anticipated natural disasters. We strive to ensure that no one is left out, and all have a voice and a place. The pursuit of this ideal serves as a sign and indicator of what humanity will be like when God’s “will is done on earth.”¹

Our global mission is to: (i) proclaim the Good News of God’s realm; (ii) teach, baptize and nurture new believers; (iii) respond to peoples’ needs through loving service; (iv) break down unjust structures to maintain peace and justice; and (iv) strive to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation and to sustain and renew the earth.

In this statement we share with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) the framework that informs the way we have lived out our faith as sisters. Central to our theology is the belief that if one part of our community suffers, the whole community suffers.² We are called to speak against injustice and “economic apartheid” of our times, to care for widows, orphans, aliens and the impoverished.

One hundred Anglican women shall participate in the 52nd session of the CSW. With them come a wealth of cultural diversity, experiences and lessons that are rooted in lived experiences from the rural, urban, indigenous and uprooted as well as the displaced/refugee communities.

The Participation and Contribution

In preparation for this 52nd session, we reflected and realized that our theology is not lived out in the ways in which our national budgets are examined and policies developed. There is a profound imbalance of funding for programmes which benefit women and shape their lives. Yet we know from experiences and statistics that women and girls are the poorest, most oppressed and violated: with limited access to education and natural resources like water, energy, land and yet are victims of sex trade and “slave labour” markets.

We cannot ignore the stunning increase worldwide in violence against women. Particularly disturbing is the use of rape and sexual violence as a tool of warfare. As a tool for empowerment, we advocated for gender policy in the Communion.

Accomplishments

Our efforts in the Communion have yielded resolution ACC-1331³ to adopt and affirm the work of the Anglican Women’s Network; acknowledging the MDG

¹ Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams, TEAN Report; Boksburg-Johannesburg, March 2007.

² Opening remarks by Katherine Jefferts Schori: TEAN Conference; Boksburg-Johannesburg, March 2007.

³ The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) Resolution ACC-1331.

Goal of equal representation (50 per cent) of women in decision-making at all levels and establishing a women's desk. Every one of the 38 Provinces is being pressed to create and/or activate a "woman's desk" to assure serious attention to issues which affect women and girls — both within the church and in the surrounding secular society at large. Gender Desks have been set up in Canada, the Sudan, Ireland, northern India, Pakistan and the United States of America.

The International Anglican women's network (IAWN) is dealing with gender-based violence. Women live in fear of being raped on water and food lines. In October 2007 it was on record that a total of 351 cases of rape were reported in North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. This represents a 60 per cent increase from August.⁴ In support of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and as a direct response to the situation, a major conference was held by IAWN to address gender-based violence. Financing still needs to be allocated to victims to cover both their physical and psycho-social treatment as IAWN continues to advocate for women to be spiritually empowered to live their lives with dignity.

In Canada and Australia an international programme of men dedicated to changing other men's violent attitudes and behaviour patterns towards women and girls has been active.

We have created a website: www.iawn.anglicancommunion.org which is reaching millions of women across the globe and enlisting them in the quest for peace and justice and a blog for the CSW.

We note how the current economic theories have failed to incorporate/recognize domestic work of women. This gender resource gap is particularly severe for countries that have heavy External Debt burden as most of the funds are redirected from financing the social services where women's needs predominate, to servicing debt.

In a bid to build our capacity we are holding training in economic literacy and analysis of national budgets and macroeconomic policies to support the reproductive and care economy. A session on Gender Budgeting was facilitated by UNIFEM. One of the direct outcomes of that session was the development of a tool kit by the Anglican Women Empowerment (AWE).

One other aspect of "financing for gender equality and empowerment" we are directly involved in is microfinance. Not having access to start-up or expansion funds is an enormous barrier to women's entrepreneurship endeavours. However microcredit is now seen to disempower some women and is therefore being looked at from a more critical perspective. Some studies show that poor women suffer conflicting demands for the microfinancing they receive.

However the discovery of websites on sponsoring new business undertakings or expansions has brought the concept of microcredit into reality for Anglican women. Endeavours such as the launching of a ceramics business in Mexico and having better feed for raising healthier pigs in Indonesia are examples of microinvestment opportunities which then assist these women entrepreneurs into better lives even for their families.

⁴ UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) October 11, 2007.

Recommendations and Commitments

At the United Nations fifty-second session, we call for:

- The Creation of an Independent Women Specific Agency but with raised status and budget.
- The use of women's mechanisms to inform the development and design of all macroeconomic policies for financing development.
- The development and implementation of fiscal policies in the reproductive and care economy.
- Women's empowerment and negotiation skills through economic literacy for effective participation in economic decision-making in a gender-mixed environment.
- The promotion and the observance of the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) that is binding on countries to stem violence against women.
- The provision of finances for treatment and psychosocial care and infrastructure for post-rape victims and their families.
- The legislation against sex tourism/industry and commercialization of girls by the fashion industry.

The Anglican Women and the rest of the Communion Commit to:

- Fight cultural values that commercialize and make girls vulnerable and examine value systems at home and in the church.
- Facilitate wider information dissemination on gender concerns.
- Modify legislation within the church and the community to reflect better policies for women especially ordination of women.
- Apply gender budgeting knowledge in all church budgets.
- Focus on quality of female leadership as one way to move beyond parity.
- Benchmark and measure impact of gender programmes.
- Raise funds for women to attend international conferences, particularly the United Nations.
- Examine scripture and use it as a basis to fight patriarchy.

Strengthen Peace and Justice Initiatives by:

- Focusing in areas of conflict and human displacement.
- Highlighting issues of refugee women and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in position papers and conduct press conferences in partnership with governments.
- Speaking against human rights violations and the use of rape and sexual violence as a tool of war.
- Providing appropriate coordination of resources, practical and theological, from within the Anglican Communion and relief for refugees and displaced persons.

On maternal/girls and child mortality we shall continue to:

- Develop awareness and encourage dialogue with young people about HIV and AIDS and promote adolescent health education as an entry point to safe motherhood.
- Use our well-organized groups to assist in education and awareness building.
- Advocate for adequate transportation/infrastructure for access to medical facilities.
- Address domestic violence also to ensure women have healthy pregnancies and live full lives.
- Develop training for Early Childhood Development and for parents/caregivers.

Conclusion

Finally, we note that this is not just about money to finance gender and women's empowerment but the need for political will and change of mindset of those allocating resources and who do not seem to know the benefit of financing gender!

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Galatians 6:9
