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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 International Council of Women, 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 International Council of Women (ICW) was founded in 1888, and is the first international women's organization to recognize that equality, development and peace are inextricably linked. We note that this year's priority theme, 'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women', and the review theme, 'Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace building', are similarly connected. While much attention has been given to the priority theme, we feel that the review theme is being inadequately addressed. We therefore submit this statement with the hope that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and member states can add more to the endeavour.

We see the themes at this session of the CSW as a means of implementing the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the raft of United Nations human rights treaties extant at this point in history, it is clear that the themes we are addressing are not new. We question whether or not it is a waste of time and resources for NGOs to repeatedly draft brief statements for the CSW each year instead of working together with the CSW to explore constructive ways to encourage the mustering of political will which is so essential for implementing the International Bill of Human Rights and the human rights treaties which would guarantee human rights for all and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The *New York Times* reported that at the founding meeting of the ICW in 1888, Julia Ward Howe called the attention of ICW members to organization: "It is important for us to ascertain what organizations can and...can not do ... One of the problems is the reconciliation of the far and the near, the regulation of relations between the particular and the general ... But as great names are often made to serve merely personal ends, there must be observation and suggestion between the central power and its distant representations." With this in mind, the ICW has, since its inception focused on both the global and the local, and this is especially important if we wish to speak of peace.

The ICW and its affiliated national councils immediately turned their attention to international arbitration as a crucial means of working towards the achievement of women's and, ultimately, human rights. The ICW contributed to the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899, and played a catalytic role in the Second Hague Peace Conference of 1907. Out of these conferences emerged the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). ICW acknowledges the importance of the PCA, but also notes the words of ICW representative May Wright Sewall, who called for 'careful scrutiny' of all the means towards achieving peace which were before us. In this period of wide-ranging UN reform and discussions of 'gender architecture', we too must engage in such careful scrutiny. We therefore recommend the following:

1. That the CSW ask Member States and NGOs to explore, suggest and implement ways to overcome the obstacles to establishing universal human rights.
2. That the CSW at its 52nd session include a strong condemnation of slavery and child labor in its agreed conclusions and urge all states to take the necessary steps to ensure that slave labor and the trafficking of women and children will not be used as a means to finance development.

3. That the CSW turn its attention to the need to safeguard female human rights workers from persecution and all forms of violence. This will enable women living in hostile environments to fully participate in peace-building and the prevention, resolution and management of conflict.

4. That the CSW ask the Secretary-General to prepare a report for its 53rd session on the participation of women in the PCA, as the PCA is an important body for international dispute resolution.

5. That the CSW request UN Member States to implement Security Council resolution 1325 in its agreed conclusions.

6. That the CSW, in co-operation with NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, turn its attention to finding new ways for NGOs to contribute to its work in a timely and informed fashion.
