



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2008

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-third session

2-13 March 2009

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

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: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by International Alliance 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.6/2009/1.



Statement*

Care work and decision-making

The International Alliance of Women, Equal Rights – Equal Responsibilities (IAW) started over a century ago as the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, campaigning for women's franchise. Our foremothers' main argument was that "in all lands, those laws, creeds, and customs which have tended to restrict women to a position of dependence..... have produced an artificial and unjust relation of the sexes"¹ and that only women's participation in political decision-making at all levels would bring about the necessary change towards improving women's lives. The International Alliance of Women still holds firm to these principles.

According to the draft final report of the Expert Group Meeting, Geneva, October 2008, "unequal sharing of responsibilities is considered to be multi-dimensional, covering a wide range of decisions and activities at the household and community levels and extending beyond these to employment, education and governance, inter alia"². In this context the IAW is of the opinion that holding women and girls in inferior roles and positions at all levels, resulting in an uneven distribution of rights and responsibilities – and not only in the area of care and social provisioning – is a crucial source of inequality; as is the under-recognition and the low value assigned to the care economy in general and the unremunerated care work mainly performed by women and girls, in particular. Validating care work and social provisioning, as part of the quality of governance a country enjoys, would also mean a shift from military to social spending.

In the view of the International Alliance of Women "adjusting the relation of the sexes" in the context of care and social provisioning would therefore mean to:

- Value and validate care work by channelling national wealth from arms trade and military spending to care, health, education and welfare;
- Enforce the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and adopt positive actions and temporary special measure to enhance women's equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels, and in all areas-- not only in the realm of social development;
- Implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women article 5 (a) without reservations by fighting stereotypes and prejudices as well as customary and other practices based on the idea of the inferior role of women compared to men;
- Establish scrutiny of national laws that discriminate against women by means of the appointment of a special rapporteur on such laws;

* Issued without formal editing.

¹ International Woman Suffrage Alliance, Declaration of Principles, 1904.

² Final Report of the Expert Group Meeting on "Equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS", Geneva, 6-9 October, 2008.

- Support a life-cycle approach in research on intra-household inequality and time-use surveys as well as improve and disseminate data on women's (and men's) work and private life situations³.
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³ Commission on the Status of Women, 50th session, 2006, Agreed Conclusions on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels".