



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
10 December 2012

Original: English

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the 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**

### **Statement submitted by Transnational Radical Party, 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.



## Statement

### **Worldwide ban on female genital mutilation and the General Assembly resolution on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of this practice**

Female genital mutilation is one of the most widespread and systematic violations of the universal human right to personal integrity, and an affront to the dignity of millions of women and girls who have been subjected to or continue to be at risk worldwide, irreversibly damaging them both physically and psychologically.

Over the past decade, high-level political will to combat female genital mutilation has increased significantly, encouraged by and, in turn, encouraging grass-roots action. Complementing the manifold actions at the national and regional levels, Transnational Radical Party, together with No Peace Without Justice, the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, the European Network for the Prevention and Eradication of Harmful Traditional Practices, in particular Female Genital Mutilation, and La Palabre, spearheaded an international campaign for a worldwide ban on female genital mutilation, supporting the actions of the Member States that are at the forefront of the fight against this practice both nationally and, increasingly, internationally, and leading to the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly in 2012.

All partners take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Member States and United Nations agencies as well as the leaders in Africa and worldwide whose commitment and political will have been key in making this a reality, as well as the thousands of women and men from all walks of life whose support has been instrumental in this historic achievement. It marks a significant step towards the realization of the vision shared by our organization and our partners in Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, South-East Asia and other places still afflicted by this harmful practice of a world where female genital mutilation lives on only in the history books.

This is why the General Assembly resolution is so important; it is a demonstration of clear commitment and political will at the highest levels to confront female genital mutilation with the tools that human rights violations require and acknowledges the gravity of the practice and its effect on the lives of millions of people. It reinforces the importance of previous United Nations declarations protecting the rights of women and children and mirrors important steps already taken at the regional level, such as the commitment by the African Union to the elimination of female genital mutilation in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which requires member States to adopt all political and legislative measures necessary to eradicate this practice.

Action by the General Assembly steps up and demonstrates the international community's universal condemnation of this blatant human rights violation, with important implications worldwide. It contributes significantly to a global change in the perception of female genital mutilation as a clear human rights violation against millions of girls and women around the world, instead of masking the practice as merely a cultural, religious or public health issue. Such characterizations were effectively euphemisms that served to shield decision-makers from the need to take action. The resolution helps to strengthen the development of a political and social environment that challenges the attitudes and behaviours that have hampered efforts

to reduce female genital mutilation and facilitates coordinated and comprehensive actions explicitly aimed at its elimination. It does so by recognizing female genital mutilation for what it is, a form of violence against girls and women, and by helping to shift the discourse and the required response accordingly.

The General Assembly resolution also helps to strengthen the development of a legal environment that can support and lead the political and social commitment to eliminating female genital mutilation by stating clearly that it is a violation of human rights. The resolution serves to strengthen existing laws that ban female genital mutilation by reinforcing their legitimacy and helps the enactment of legislation, in countries where to date there is none, that includes sanctions against the perpetrators of this practice, as a clear, unequivocal and tangible sign of the State's commitment to eliminate female genital mutilation. The resolution encourages the allocation of sufficient resources for the effective implementation of legislation and action plans aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation, which is fundamental both as a political statement on the importance of the issue and as a practical means of accomplishing its elimination. It also provides an impetus for donors, be they State or private, to include and prioritize the elimination of female genital mutilation in their programming, allowing them to provide vital support for those who have been working towards the elimination of female genital mutilation, often at financial loss.

The resolution helps to strengthen the development of a legal environment that can support and lead political and social commitment to eliminating female genital mutilation by stating clearly that it is a violation of human rights and helping to promote the adoption of national legislation to ban female genital mutilation that includes sanctions against persons continuing the practice and ends impunity, as a clear, unequivocal and tangible sign of the State's commitment to eliminate it. It serves to strengthen laws that currently ban female genital mutilation by reinforcing their legitimacy, to provide new impetus for those countries that currently do not have such laws on the books and to ease the path towards enacting and applying the most effective legislation possible in all countries where female genital mutilation is committed.

The resolution also reinforces the indefatigable efforts of the thousands of activists working locally, nationally and internationally to eliminate female genital mutilation. It celebrates those who were brave enough to speak out against female genital mutilation when it was a taboo to do so and heartens those who still work in such environments, often at great personal risk. It both encourages and provides legitimacy for those working for the enactment of and compliance with legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation, aiding their struggle by showing that the international community is firmly on their side. It acknowledges the courage of the women and girls who have said no to female genital mutilation and helps give confidence to those who want to say no but have lacked the support to do so.

The impact of the resolution lies in the lives of ordinary people who look to the United Nations, its Member States and its agencies to help make their world a better place. The urgent need to help to raise awareness, to support victims and to protect women and girls who are at risk by involving all sectors and levels of society is given a boost when the international community speaks as a whole and takes an unequivocal and joint stance condemning and taking the necessary action to hasten the elimination of female genital mutilation, definitively consigning it to the history books.