



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-seventh session

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**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 Salvation Army, 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

The Salvation Army is an international movement and an evangelical branch of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.

We recognize as an organization that violence against women and girls takes many forms, some subtle and some blatant. Some of those forms are physical abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse. Others take the form of intimate partner/domestic violence, rape, forced child marriage, sexual violence, neglect of female children, female genital mutilation/cutting, incest, honour killing, wife inheritance, marital rape and sex and labour trafficking.

As a faith-based organization, we uphold women and girls as being created in the image of God as equal partners with men and boys. We recognize our capacity and our responsibility to prevent violence through corrective teaching and education and through our social welfare programmes for individuals and for families.

We care for all who come to us for assistance, including victims of violence, and we offer them support and counselling and seek to meet their need at the point of need.

We understand that there are root causes of violence against women and girls. Many of these factors demean and diminish the dignity of women and girls, leaving them exposed to an increased risk of violence against them.

We acknowledge the promises made in section L of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls, specifically addressing violence, education, economic exploitation and harmful attitudes and practices. We are reminded that, despite the promises made, many women and girls continue to be denied their political, economic, social and cultural rights and are subjected to behaviour that hinders their physical, spiritual and social development.

We recognize that, in many cases, cultural values, attitudes, beliefs and practices can influence the nature of violence against women and girls. Cultural acceptance of discrimination can lead to structural discrimination. Cultural values and practices can determine the roles of women and men in society and the degree of acceptance of discrimination, subservience and superiority. Women and girls can fall victim to culturally acceptable traditional practices that violate their human rights.

We recognize that, in many cultures, violence against women and girls is not talked about openly. In some cultures and societies, such discussions are taboo, with violence often part of traditional beliefs or practices. Violence is kept a family secret and any police report is often made secretly. In addition, violence against widows is also seen as a cultural practice. Talking openly would bring shame to the victim's family, therefore leaving the victim without protection in such a society.

We recognize that many women and girls fall victim to culturally acceptable traditional practices that violate their human rights, such as neglect of female children, female genital mutilation/cutting, incest and forced child marriage. From infancy, women are taught to accept violence as normal and believe that it is usual in all of society.

Many women and girls are influenced by media discrimination against them in terms of the way in which they are portrayed. In many countries, the media, advertising and the fashion industry often portray women and girls as objects and influence their thinking by glorifying violence and downplaying the value of women. This can lead to few reports being made to the authorities about violence against women and girls.

There are many factors that affect women and girls in relation to the elimination of violence, such as honour killing, where it is estimated that over 5,000 girls and women are murdered by family members in the name of honour. It is also estimated that over 100 million girls and women have experienced female genital mutilation. One of the adverse health consequences associated with female genital mutilation is higher levels of chronic infections, often resulting in sterility.

The United Nations has been very active in its condemnation of human trafficking, which directly violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in particular, its prohibition of slavery and servitude (art. 4) and its guarantees of freedom of movement (art. 13), freedom from forced marriage (art. 16) and free choice of employment (art. 23). Human trafficking is the fastest-growing type of crime in the world. It has become a very lucrative criminal business, mainly because the person, as a commodity, can be sold repeatedly. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, the global market for child trafficking alone results in over \$12 billion per year, with a reported 1 million to 2 million child victims. According to the Department of State of the United States of America, it is estimated that over 800,000 people are bought and sold across international boundaries every year, approximately 50 per cent of whom are girls used for sexual exploitation. According to the International Labour Organization, those most likely to be trafficked are women and girls, with 98 per cent trafficked for sex and 55 per cent for labour. Children are sold for work, begging, sexual exploitation, drug smuggling, forced marriage or adoption, or used as child soldiers or for organ harvesting.

We, the Salvation Army, as a faith-based organization, wish to make the recommendations set out below.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to increase development aid that targets the creation of legitimate income-generating possibilities for women and families with children to educate and empower women and girls.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to share best practices with regard to material used for awareness-raising programmes in schools, churches, law enforcement agencies and health-care systems.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to raise awareness and to promote community involvement so that deeply rooted discriminatory practices against women and girls are eliminated and to use the media and social media to raise awareness.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to share best practices that promote effective policies and practices where human rights approaches are used to challenge gender-based violence and harmful practices.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to educate and empower girls and women to reject gender-based norms and to find other opportunities.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States and Governments who have not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol thereto to do so. Officials in Member States have mothers, daughters, aunts and nieces who are affected by violence.

We call upon the Commission to urge Member States to partner with civil society and faith-based groups to conduct awareness and education campaigns about gender discrimination and gender-based violence in all its forms.

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