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Commission on the Status of Women

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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 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.



Statement

The Anglican Consultative Council, representing 85 million Anglican Christians in more than 165 countries, has been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1985. The Anglican Consultative Council is committed to seeking relief for all women and girls from the harsh and disproportionate consequences of conflict, poverty, violence, discrimination and the trauma of natural disasters on their lives and well-being. In view of the high priority given to this commitment, Anglican Consultative Council delegations, with membership drawn from across the worldwide Anglican Communion, have been present at the Commission on the Status of Women in significant numbers for more than 10 years, and we particularly welcome the opportunity to participate in this session with its priority theme: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

We understand “gender-based violence” to be violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim, and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman or a girl because she is a woman or a girl, or affects women and girls disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological harm, and it includes violence perpetrated or condoned by the community or by the State. Gender-based violence may be hidden and shrouded in stigma, but our experience is that it happens all over the world, in all our communities.

The Anglican Consultative Council seeks immediate action to eradicate this and all forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls, including trafficking for sexual purposes. The Anglican Consultative Council especially seeks to endorse, promote and emphasize that the work of preventing and eliminating gender-based violence is the work of all — men and women, boys and girls. Although often considered a “women’s issue”, it is the responsibility of all sectors of our communities.

A core belief of the Christian faith is that women and men, girls and boys are cherished equally by God. In January 2011, a global gathering of Anglican Church leaders wrote a Letter to the Churches of the Anglican Communion, saying: “Our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that women and men are made in the image of God.” Recognizing the urgency of this issue, they committed themselves to working locally and strategically to eliminate gender-based violence. In November 2012 their commitment was endorsed by the Anglican Consultative Council.

Our work towards preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls will build on action already being taken across the Anglican Communion and will take into account local experience, cultures, need and expertise. This action includes awareness-raising, advocacy, education to change attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence, the care and reintegration into society of victims/survivors of violence, and working with perpetrators of violence. We have highlighted the importance of, and will attend further to: the training of clergy and pastors so that they are aware of the nature and dynamics of gender-based violence and how certain

behaviours can be challenged and transformed; participation in the White Ribbon campaign led by men and boys who condemn and act against violence against women and girls and in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence; and engagement with young people so that boys and girls, young men and young women are enabled to honour themselves and one another and are empowered to be agents of change among their peers.

We urge all States Members of the United Nations:

- To promote equality for women as active and equal “decision makers” at all levels of society, within their families, locally, nationally and internationally
- To celebrate and promote women’s and girls’ contributions to our communities as valuable and integral to the health and well-being of all aspects of society
- To expose the silence surrounding, and the extent of, gender-based violence
- To identify and address all factors in our communities and societies that lead to violence, its hiddenness and the lack of will to address gender-based violence
- To address matters of inequality, stereotyping, discrimination and other factors that lead to women and girls being made vulnerable through unequal power relationships
- To call into question cultural and structural aspects that endorse and perpetuate violence against women and girls
- To take immediate action to eradicate sexual violence as a tactic or weapon of war and all forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls, including trafficking for sexual purposes
- To enter into partnerships with civil society, including faith-based organizations, in programmes that encourage men and women, boys and girls to speak out against gender-based violence, and develop and act on strategies for its elimination
- To provide and enforce robust legislation that protects women and girls and promotes equal relationship across all aspects of our societies
- To develop monitoring and regular reporting instruments which highlight resources and programmes of best practice and expose areas still requiring action in the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence

The global cost of violence against women and girls, and its impact on development, economies and health, is incalculable. Our experience is that its impact on human lives is also incalculable. The Anglican Communion, with its presence throughout the world, is well placed and is fully committed to challenging gender-based violence and taking action. We look forward to our continued work with the United Nations, Member States, other civil society groups and agencies, and local communities in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls.