



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2013
English
Original: French

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

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 Fédération européenne des centres de recherche et d’information sur le sectarisme, 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 situation of women in totalitarian cult groups, commonly referred to as sects

The situation of women in the groups in question is rarely referred to when issues related to education, health and access to appropriate and decent employment are discussed. Yet many cases have clearly shown such women and young girls to be silent victims of a macho and totalitarian system in which all of their rights are flouted.

In sectarian groups that function on a totalitarian basis, women are relegated to a lower status. They do the dirty work, are sexual slaves of the leaders and are forced into perverse and unwanted sexual relationships. Such revolting practices were reported during a recent trial in France.

Minors are separated from their mothers so that both the children and the mothers may be more effectively indoctrinated (Sahaja Yoga).

The work that women carry out for the group leaves no time for training that would enable them to be integrated into society. They are thus penalized within and outside the group, to their own disadvantage and to the detriment of society in general.

Competent persons are compelled to use their skills in the service of the group and the leader's ideology, thereby fully forfeiting their free will and any future in the scientific community (Raëlism).

The future of children and women in sectarian groups is at variance with the MDGs. The sects' internal education systems do not prepare children to lead a life conducive to harmonious development or social contributions. Often, those children are out of step with public school learning. The "psychological isolation" to which they are subjected prompts them to reject the education offered by the teachers. That applies to children whose parents are Jehovah's Witnesses. The author of this statement draws a clear distinction between respect for a faith and sectarian excesses.

Vigilance is required because sects may infiltrate and insidiously disseminate their ideology through the education systems (Scientology, Mahikari).

Awareness of the above enduring situation is crucial to attaining the MDGs. We therefore request the United Nations to recognize the gravity of the problem and to recommend that Member States take appropriate measures to eradicate it.