



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2013

Original: English

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 Center for Africa Development and Progress, 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 present statement addresses the priority theme of the session, “Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls”, and the review theme, “Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work”.

A nation without science and technology has no place in the twenty-first century. Every aspect of human life today revolves around science and technology. But leveraging technology for development does not happen in isolation; it requires an environment that enables the production and deployment of technology.

The choice of the priority theme could not have been more appropriate, particularly as women and girls still suffer inhumane treatment.

Coercion is used simply to establish and maintain power and control over a victim. It takes many forms, including physical/bodily harm, sexual activity elicited through the use of force, assault, the use of physical violence to instil fear, threats and intimidation, economic deprivation, etc. The result is that victims are denied their fundamental human rights, while their psychological and emotional well-being are compromised and their development is seriously undermined.

Though violence against women and girls is a global phenomenon, it is quite common in poor and developing countries where the struggle for survival takes precedence over human rights.

In Africa in particular, violence against the female gender is deeply rooted in the social fabric of the people, their culture and traditions. As a result, the perpetrator is sometimes not even aware that he is abusing a fellow human being since subconsciously, he has been brought up to think that he has more rights than women and girls do.

In Ghana, for instance, official records indicate that three out of five women have suffered some form of violence, while one out of three women is reported to have experienced some form of assault by a man. The victims of these barbaric acts are mostly related (by blood) to the perpetrators.

The Center for Africa Development and Progress strongly believes that the number of women and girls reported to have suffered abuse is an underestimation because not all victims of abuse report their ordeal to the authorities.

Suffice it to state that in most African cultures, violence within the family is considered a private matter. Therefore, families often settle such issues privately without recourse to the law.

However, some women and girls have managed to bring their suffering into the open. These women and girls ought to be saluted for refusing to sweep their horrendous experiences under the carpet and making it possible for the rest of the society to share in their stories.

We should encourage more women and girls to report all forms of abuse to make it possible for society to isolate those who disrespect, violate and discriminate against women. We acknowledge the level of progress being made globally as far as

advocacy against violence is concerned. However, we believe that Governments need to do more to root out this social canker.

The Center for Africa Development and Progress makes the following recommendations.

To end all forms of violence against women and girls and improve their welfare, we urge Member States to rigorously fight discrimination against women and girls by promoting gender equality.

Member States must be encouraged to implement existing United Nations conventions for the promotion of human rights, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Conscious efforts must be made to form and change attitudes of men and boys with a view to preventing violence in the first place. Member States should use the power of the media to promote healthy relationships between the genders.

We must inculcate in pupils a higher sense of discipline and positive attitudes discourage violent behaviours. The school curricula should develop skills and values that foster positive relationships.

Women in developing countries lack economic power and are therefore dependent on men for sustenance and survival. We urge Member States to take deliberate steps to develop programmes for the economic emancipation of women.

We encourage Governments to institute laws that punish those who violate the rights of women and girls in order to discourage would-be perpetrators. Victims should be adequately compensated. It is not enough to promulgate laws; Member States must ensure that they are enforced.

While Governments should deal appropriately with human rights violators, it is also necessary for persons who promote the rights of women and girls to be recognized so they can serve as models to be emulated.

Governments should take bold steps to deal ruthlessly with individuals and organizations that violate the human rights of women and girls in the name of religion. Such individuals/organizations and their sponsors should be named and shamed, and even not allowed to operate.
