



## Economic and Social Council

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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 Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı, 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**

### **Negative perception of women in the media as a challenge to the sustainable empowerment of women**

The third Millennium Development Goal is about promoting gender equality and empowering women. It is very comprehensive and includes eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education and in all countries, eliminating gender disparity in wage-earning jobs in the non-agricultural sector and eliminating discrimination faced by women in access to education, work and economic assets and participation in government. It also involves preventing all forms of violence against women and poverty, which undermine efforts to reach all those goals.

Seeing the breadth of activities and efforts to be pursued in line with the Goal, Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı has undertaken a great range of activities and projects, mainly through its women's platform, since 2009.

The platform is mainly aimed at promoting dialogue and peacebuilding at the local and global levels for the free and fair discussion of prevailing problems, including the disintegration of the family, gender-based discrimination in various areas and humanitarian crises in conflict zones, highlighting the role of women in building, maintaining and improving peace.

A big part of the efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women is the process of promoting the idea at the social level and establishing it as a widely accepted cultural value. With this idea in mind, the platform has seen the significance of the media, especially in the contemporary age of information and networking. Accordingly, a workshop on the media's perception of women was held in Bolu, Turkey, in March 2011 to mark International Women's Day. The workshop brought together many journalists, writers, academics and activists with different perspectives, concluding with a final declaration. Considering the increasing rate of female homicide, the final declaration also included an urgent plan of action to stop the killings.

The workshop highlighted the role of the media in constructing a cultural milieu where women are given secondary status. In addition, the unequal employment rates and conditions of women in the media were directly expressed by female members of the media who participated. In this regard, the final consensus text underlined the general problems regarding the representation of women in the media that prevented all efforts to ensure sustainable gender equality and the empowerment of women. It referred to unequal working conditions for female employees in media outlets, calling for solutions that would benefit both media employees and all female employees working in the public and private sectors.

The final declaration is provided below.

### **Final declaration**

#### **Identifying the problems**

The problems are as follows:

- (a) Women are incorrectly and insufficiently represented in the media;

(b) Women are usually presented as consumer objects, not subjects. In that regard:

- (i) Their bodies are used on the front and back pages of newspapers and they are shown as victims on the third page;
- (ii) Women appear only as bodies in the digital media and there is a discriminatory approach. There are no restriction on readers' comments;
- (c) Prejudice, sexist attitudes, stereotypes (as mischief makers, etc.) and hate speech against women are widespread in the media;
- (d) Women are assigned secondary roles;
- (e) Problems related to the language of a male-dominated media are striking. Discriminatory and alienating language is used, as is a language style that portrays crimes against women (violence, harassment, rape and murder) in a positive light;
- (f) Women are robbed of their value and dignity by means of labels and tags. Discrimination against women on ideological, religious, social, economic, cultural and ethnic grounds is visible;
- (g) Different representatives of women (divorcees, single mothers or minority members) are ignored and women are represented in a single way;
- (h) The self-censorship mechanism does not work well in the media;
- (i) The working conditions of women and men in the media are not in compliance with human rights;
- (j) There is no organization to uphold the rights of media members.

### **Recommendations**

We recommend that steps be taken:

- (a) To ensure adherence to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which Turkey is a party;
- (b) To realize a new media structure that represents diversity in society;
- (c) To encourage women to take a place in decision-making mechanisms in order to establish equal representation in the media;
- (d) To prevent discrimination with regard to the employment of women with headscarves in the media;
- (e) To prevent discrimination against women in employment on grounds of religion, culture, traditional lifestyle or gender;
- (f) To establish an equal opportunity commission or similar mechanism in every media group;
- (g) To conduct, in relevant departments of universities, regular research into the employment and exploitation of women in the media;
- (h) To ensure that the gender education begun in the local media by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies of Turkey reaches the national media;

- (i) To put an end to media language that produces hatred towards women and legitimizes and affirms crimes against women;
- (j) To identify and follow up on news in the media detrimental to women;
- (k) To ensure emphasis by the media on the fact that violence against women is not simply physical, but also has a spiritual trauma dimension, in addition to ensuring wide coverage in the media of the telephone hotline for women victims of violence;
- (l) To put on the current agenda the subject of systematic psychological violence in the workplace;
- (m) To begin and disseminate campaigns to raise awareness of gender discrimination, ensuring that men participate therein;
- (n) To include gender in internal training programmes in all public institutions and organizations;
- (o) To organize workshops on gender for those working in the local, national and social media;
- (p) To make reader representation more widespread and effective and ensure that readers participate in the process of eliminating discriminatory language against women;
- (q) To make provision in the anticipated legal regulations for the Internet (regarding news sites) to combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against women;
- (r) To take concrete measures to improve the personal rights of women working in the media, such as opening childcare centres in the workplace and applying the leave without pay available in the public sector to the private sector;
- (s) To put an end to the presentation and exploitation of women as objects of display and consumption.

### **Urgent plan of action**

Non-governmental organizations, the State and the media should collaborate to urgently take concrete steps to prevent the killing of women and help to clarify its causes.

In conclusion, our organization believes that promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women requires a multidirectional and comprehensive effort, addressing the general reasons for women's disempowerment and unjust treatment in society and the specific instances in which women are subjected to such treatment. In this regard, the findings of the above-mentioned workshop indicate the link between general sociocultural assumptions about women as having secondary status in society compared with men and women's specific working conditions where they are expected to have the same conditions as men.