



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Fifty-ninth 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”**

### **Statement submitted by Endeavour Forum, 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

### Ending violence against pregnant women and the girl child

The science of how we are created is fascinating. From the time we are conceived, our DNA already determines if we are a boy or a girl and how cells will differentiate to form every organ and part of us, such as the heart, lungs, liver, immune system, kidneys, pancreas, every muscle, bone and joint, as well as blood cells, hair, ears, nose, mouth and limbs. The human foetus has a beating heart by three weeks, and visible arms, legs, fingers and toes by eight weeks. From approximately 10 to 12 weeks into a pregnancy, doctors can determine whether the child in the womb is recognizable as a boy or a girl.

*Violence begins in the womb.* Tragically, this is when and where the extreme violence against the girl child begins. Tiny little girls are systematically poisoned, dismembered or decapitated while in the sanctuary of their mothers' womb. Gender-selective abortions are done on the female child simply because she is a girl. The choice to abort one's child just because she is a girl should be unthinkable.

Aborting girls is the ultimate exploitation, discrimination and violence against girls in our generation. Many reports document that it is a common cultural belief — especially in China and India — that boys are more wanted than girls. As a result, millions of girl children are targeted for abortion or left to die after birth (infanticide). These antiquated customs and policies must be urgently addressed by all Member States and condemned by the Commission on the Status of Women. We must form an alliance to protect the youngest and weakest of our girls, who have no voice.

We also denounce the one-child policy in China, which forces and coerces pregnant women to abort their children.

*Women, girl children and health.* According to the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". Whether legal or illegal, induced abortion is not safe for the human child temporarily residing in his or her mother's womb.

*Violence against women: body, mind and soul.* Legal abortion causes much physical, psychological and spiritual damage to women.

Misinformation, rhetoric and euphemisms that tout and promote abortion as "safe and legal" abound in our modern world. Yet, research indicates that induced abortions are not safe for women's mental or reproductive health. The Elliot Institute, based in the United States of America, has done a lot of research on the aftermath of abortion-on-demand and found that many women have and do suffer for many years as a result (see [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org)). Hundreds of women in the United States alone have died as a consequence of legal abortion. Operation Outcry and Canada Silent No More has over 5,000 testimonies and declarations from former abortion patients stating the damage of legal abortion to their mental and reproductive health.

Violence against pregnant women has increased dramatically. Homicide has become the leading cause of death among pregnant women. In many cases, women are assaulted or killed for refusing to abort (choosing life for their baby). A high percentage of pregnant women have reported being punched or kicked in the

abdomen, usually by the father of the baby. These findings add to a growing body of evidence that link domestic violence and abortion.

In one study, 64 per cent of American women and teenage girls reported they were pressured to abort by others, and more than half said they felt rushed or uncertain about the abortion. In addition, more than 80 per cent said they did not receive adequate counselling prior to their abortions.

*Women's health.* A large study in Finland reported higher rates of suicide for women after abortion. Women who had an abortion had a 650 per cent higher risk of death from suicide compared to women who carried their babies to term.

Researchers from the University of Minnesota found a tenfold increase in suicide attempts among teenagers within six months after their abortion. Another study found that 50 per cent of post-abortive teenagers (15 to 18 years) had suicidal thoughts and behaviours — twice the rate of teenagers who chose not to abort.

Another study at a South African clinic found that 18 per cent of patients developed post-traumatic stress disorder after abortion.

More than 40 studies published in peer-reviewed journals with statistical controls and statistically significant results show that abortion is a risk factor for numerous psychiatric illnesses, like depression and eating or sleeping disorders.

The largest study of rape victims ever completed indicates that most women not only experience severe trauma from the rape, but also experience additional trauma if they choose to abort the baby conceived in rape. Furthermore, 89 per cent of those who chose abortion regretted it, while none of the women who carried the pregnancy to term expressed regrets.

Women also frequently suffer physical complications following abortion. One of the most significant of these complications is the increased risk of a pre-term birth in subsequent pregnancies. Researcher Brent Rooney has found over 140 studies from more than 20 countries that concluded that induced abortions that had caused cervical and uterine damage to the women were directly linked to subsequent pre-term births (see <http://justiceforkids.webs.com/chapter4140studies.htm>).

Pre-term birth is known to increase the risk for children of cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness, respiratory distress and other disabling conditions for children, as well as death.

Dozens of credible worldwide studies also link breast cancer to induced abortion, according to the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute and the Coalition on Abortion Breast Cancer ([www.bcpinstitute.org](http://www.bcpinstitute.org) and [www.abortionbreastcancer.com](http://www.abortionbreastcancer.com)).

It is our belief that legal abortion has become the greatest form of exploitation of pregnant women and pre-born children in our generation. Sadly, it is commonly used as a violent form of birth control. The choice usually lies in when, where and with whom to have sex but, once conception takes place, another human being exists — one whose life and dignity must be valued and regarded. The choice to “kill the unwanted” children, no matter how small, is similar to the Nazi philosophy and right to “kill the unwanted Jews” and should be condemned, not promoted as a woman's right and tolerated. Pregnancy is not a disease, and abortion is rarely a medical necessity.

## **Conclusion**

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action of 1995, it is stated that women's right to the enjoyment of the highest standard of health must be secured throughout the whole life cycle, in equality with men, and that prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion.

Governments are asked to address the acute problems of children, inter alia, by supporting efforts in the context of the United Nations system aimed at adopting efficient international measures for the prevention and eradication of female infanticide, harmful child labour, the sale of children and their organs, child prostitution, child pornography and other forms of sexual abuse and consider contributing to the drafting of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At the World Conference on Human Rights, it was clearly reaffirmed that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. And science declares that the cycle of human life begins at the moment of conception.

For the elimination and prevention of abortion violence against women and the girl child, we appeal to the Commission on the Status of Women and all Member States to prioritize the following actions immediately to save women and children:

- Enact education and awareness campaigns on the value of the girl child, the foetal development and research on the damage of legal abortions to women's bodies, minds and souls
- Enact measures to end violence against pregnant women and babies
- Produce accountable and protective measures against perpetrators of forced and coerced abortion
- Enact legislation and policies condemning gender-selective abortions
- Enact screening and fully informed consent laws for pregnant women seeking an abortion that include options and practical help to support the mother and her baby, as well as prenatal support
- Procure accountability in the full reporting of abortions, complications, deaths and pregnant minors for possible statutory rape, rape or incest
- Provide the basic human right to life for babies in the womb according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

We should honour motherhood. Abortion is not a black-and-white issue, it is blood red.

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