



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-fifth session

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational and Transparty, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Historically, the word leadership has always incorporated the concept of masculinity and the belief that men are naturally led to be better leaders than women. Even today this is still the situation in many areas of society, a society in which men “decide” and women “execute”; the latter are systematically excluded from important positions. This “disadvantage” that women are continually confronted with is primarily caused by the fact that the stereotypes that have been imposed on us over the centuries have been internalised by the masses.

Women are still portrayed in the common imagination as emotional and sensitive and these characteristics are not what is commonly expected of a leader, who is supposed to convey strength and assertiveness. The consequence is that it is more difficult for a woman to be elected and therefore political and religious authorities, in particular, are more inclined to choose male candidates for key positions. For many, a woman who speaks about important things, a woman who speaks because her opinion matters, is a dangerous subversion.

If these premises are correct, then it is not surprising that the issue of gender equality should be a fundamental point to support and fight for both in politics and religion, as we know very well how deeply and intimately involved they are in gender politics.

We are faced with a fundamentalism that is present in all religious denominations, which are pursuing a strongly patriarchal system against the common global threat of gender equality, women’s emancipation and feminism.

Traditional religious institutions tend to see feminist agendas and in particular the very notion of gender as a contingent reality as the greatest threat not only to their religious traditions and moral authority claims, but to the very idea of a sacred or divinely ordered natural order. This attitude necessarily provokes a feminist response that tends to consider religious fundamentalism, or rather religion itself, as the main obstacle to the global progress of women’s rights and civil society.

It is therefore no coincidence that there is no religious confession headed by a woman; just as it is no coincidence that there is no theocratic, totalitarian, authoritarian, militarist regime whose leader is a woman.

This means that policies for the affirmation of the rule of law and fundamental human rights must be intimately linked to gender policies.

The need to promote and protect gender, equality and women’s rights today is one of the most important issues facing global humanity and it is an issue of growing importance for the near future.

The task of somehow bridging the huge gap between the norm of gender equality and the appalling reality of inequality of value, inequality of status and inequality of access to resources and power that women suffer from around the world is likely to remain one of the most important tasks and historical-political challenges of the contemporary age.

The inequality that exists in all areas of society to the detriment of women is therefore an issue that damages human rights as it becomes the ultimate expression of the denial of equality and gender equality. It is therefore a phenomenon that must always find new and more effective ways of preventing and combating it. These instruments must first and foremost be those of the law, starting with those of domestic law but, failing that, it is essential that there are international instruments and that they have binding force.