

**Informal summary
Coordination segment
of the Economic and Social Council 2008**

Roundtable on “The role of the Economic and Social Council in addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations: a dialogue with the chairpersons of the functional commissions”

New York, 8 July 2008

Chair: **H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Moneteiro Lima**, Vice-President of ECOSOC
Panelists: **Ms. Lorena Gimenez**, Vice-Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development;
Mr. Pali Lehola, Chairperson of the Statistical Commission;
Ms. Elana Zuniga Herrera, Chairperson of the Commission on Population and Development
Moderator: **Mr. Olivier Belle**, Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women

Key Points:

- Violence against women is a complex global problem that must be addressed.
- ECOSOC and its functional commissions are to play a vital role in bringing together the political will to find ways of ending violence against women.
- Prevention is an important area in fighting violence against women. It can take several forms, including: changing the mindset; empower women, including through income generation and education; and breaking the law of silence and encourage women to speak up.
- There is a need to take action against violence against women, including through implementing policies and measures. Women must have legal rights that are accessible. The work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was cited in this regard.
- We need better tools, such as statistics. Statistics form the basis of presenting cases and draw people’s attention. They also contribute to better policy formulation. The work launched by the Statistical Commission through its Friends of Chair group to review proposed indicators on violence against women was praised by many.

H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Moneteiro Lima opened the roundtable, stating that the roundtable was an opportunity for the Council to follow up on the General Assembly resolution 61/143 on “Intensification of Efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women”. The GA resolution invited ECOSOC and its functional commissions to discuss the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations and to set priorities for addressing this issue in their future work programmes. With this roundtable the Council aims to review what has been learned through the experience of the functional commissions on this issue.

Mr. Olivier Belle discussed how violence against women exists because of unequal power relations between women and men and that efforts to prevent and address such violence must be grounded in the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The responses to this violence must be systematic, comprehensive, multi-sectoral and sustained. They must be supported by strong institutional mechanisms and adequate financing. He stated that the

roundtable was important for the Council by providing an opportunity to take a leadership role in the common effort to tackle the global scourge of violence against women.

Ms. Lorena Giminez delivered the statement of **H.E. MS. Kirsti Lintonen**, Chairperson of the Commission for Social Development, on her behalf. Ms. Lintonen reported on the focused discussion on the issue held during this year's session of the Commission as a follow-up to the GA resolution 61/143. Since the Commission's priority theme was "promoting full employment and decent work", the discussion focused on three major issues related to violence against women in the work environment: the inter linkages between decent work and gender based discrimination; a review of recent developments in women's participation in labour and the most effective policy interventions; and proposals to eradicate all forms of violence against women. Ms. Lintonen observed that the limited range of opportunities and choices for women could only be remedied through gender sensitive labour market policies.

Ms. Lintonen further referred to the progress made in women's participation in the labour markets. Gender gaps in education are being narrowed and more women than men enroll in tertiary education in most regions of the world. The rate of women's entry into the labour force is also increasing. While the ratio of women in high profile jobs has increased, women still remain a minority among workers at the highest level, including at the United Nations. A challenge faced by most women is that they must balance labour-market work with domestic work and that their overall workload is greater than men due to additional hours spent for unpaid work. In addition, women continue to earn less than average male, even for the same type of work or work of equal value.

Ms. Elana Zuniga Herrera reviewed the Council's role in help for women. She mentioned that the Cairo Meeting on population and development placed empowerment of women as a prerequisite for sustainable development. She reported that in 2007, in pursuant to the GA resolution 61/143, the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development invited Member States to include in their national reports Government strategies to combat violence against women for its 40th session. The Commission also invited an expert from the Division on Advancement of Women to that session, who highlighted the violence in the family could be the result of old traditions and practices that place women in a subordinate role. She noted that while most countries have made progress in amending legal standards but still have to be improved especially in specific fields such as a woman's property rights. Ms. Herrera pointed out that in order to stop violence and discrimination against women it is necessary to identify the cause of such action. In 2007 at the 40th session of the Commission, the Member States discussed their activities to reduce violence against women and the importance of mainstreaming gender perspective was highlighted. It was also noted that in order to achieve equal rights between women and men, violence against women need to be eliminated.

Mr. Pali Lehola reported on the results of the 39th session of the Statistical Commission, held in February 2008. One of the outcomes was the endorsement of the formation of the Friends of the Chair group to conduct an in-depth technical review of proposed indicators to measure violence against women. The group is requested to report back to the Commission at its fortieth session for approval. Mr. Lehola stated that the Friends of the Chair group was in the midst of exchanging ideas and opinions online on a variety of key issues, including type of information and statistics required, definitions and concepts of types of violence and whether the proposed set of indicators would be sufficient. It is planned that after this exchange of thoughts, the group will orient its review and develop suggestions.

Mr. Bell explained that although the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) could not be represented this panel, CCPCJ, as a technical commission on criminal justice, had worked extensively on the criminal justice system to enhance protection of victims. Then, speaking as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), he informed the participants that he had the opportunity to participate in the CCPCJ thematic debate on violence against women last April. He stated that CCPCJ recognized the effective criminal justice responses to all forms of violence against women and girls require close cooperation between all key stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, prosecutors, victim advocates, medical professionals and forensic scientists. He reported that CCPCJ will organize an expert meeting to review the Model Strategies on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women and other stakeholders.

Mr. Bell further added as Chairperson of CSW that the Commission on the Status of Women is committed to work on this issue. He reported that CSW has regularly considered aspects of violence against women in relation to the priority themes of the session, such as violence against the girl child or in relation to HIV/AIDS. He reiterated that CSW and the Statistical Commission has a long-standing relationship and hoped that CSW will continue its consideration of indicators on violence against women in 2009.

In the pursuing discussion, **the Philippines** said that the constitution of the Philippine protects gender equality. The Supreme Court of Philippine punishes all forms of violence against women and children. The Philippines complimented the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice as well as other UN agencies for their efforts in protecting women's rights. The Philippines suggested that UN resolutions and decisions should be more gender-sensitive and empower women in the decision-making process. He also put forth the question of what ECOSOC's role would be in the global campaign to end violence against women.

France, on behalf of the European Union (EU), stated that the EU places high importance on this issue and referred to the work of the EU towards the guideline on the issue. He also welcomed the efforts undertaken by several bodies of the UN system and touched on the potential role that ECOSOC could play in advancing fight against violence against women. France then asked what would be the best way to build on the contributions that functional commissions have made in pursuant to the GA resolutions 61/143 and 62/133 and to ensure the consistency. He further asked how the future programmes would be attributed to the issue of violence against women and how these contributions would be transmitted to the Secretary-General.

El Salvador said that the emerging cost of prosecution of perpetrators and the indirect cost of loss of employment opportunities for women and human suffering need to attract more attention. Eliminating violence against women should be mainstreamed and society needs to invest in providing comprehensive help and support for women. El Salvador noted the close linkage of maltreatment of women and migration, and women's contribution to development, especially financial development.

Congo said one of their national priorities was the promotion of women. The fundamental cause of violence against women is the unequal relationship between men and women due to social and cultural stereotypes, especially in African rural areas. Congo suggested that emphases should be put on strengthening the awareness building measures so that we can overcome taboos of women's contribution to society.

Indonesia said that Beijing Platform for Action set the framework for combating violence against women. However, there is still significant gap between policy and implementation. All

stakeholders should translate MDG goals into practical action. Indonesia has already incorporated this issue in the mid-term national action plan aligning with other policies such as education, environment, health and rural development. Indonesia asked how to change the mindset of people regarding women's role in particular countries.

Belarus supports the work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and pointed out that violence against women undermines the harmony of society and has tremendous economic and social consequences. Comprehensive and effective national policy needs to take a long-term conceptual approach that brings strategy and practical measures together. Belarus recommended specialized UN bodies to fight this issue and the setting up of an international center for women trafficking.

Brazil stressed the inter-connectiveness of issues related to eliminating violence against women. Protecting women from violence is part of their human rights. All UN entities should coordinate in an integrated manner in this regards. Brazil asked what ECOSOC's role would be in this context.

Republic of Korea pointed out the link between eliminating violence against women and increasing productivity and employment of women so that society can provide decent work for all. They called for all UN entities to fully address this issue in their respective mandates and asked specifically what the future plan of Commission on the Status of Women is in addressing this issue.

The United States underscored that Security Council and General Assembly have complementary roles in this issue, but suggested that ECOSOC should maintain a broader treatment of the issue. It was pointed out that the problem of impunity is still under report and women feel that there is no other way to deal with this issue but keep silent. The United States asked if the Statistics Commission can help inform all parts of the UN system. Regarding the Campaign launched by the Secretary-General, the United States asked what actually happened and what has been done.

The Netherlands welcomed this roundtable that took place as a follow-up to the GA resolution 61/143 and hoped that the Council keeps discussion on this issue. The Netherlands agreed that statistics serve as an important indicator in this issue and welcomed that the process has been initiated under the Statistical Commission.

In responding to several questions raised by the floor, **Ms. Elena Zuniga Herrera** congratulated the form of roundtable discussion and called for other commissions to make their respective contribution on this issue. As for the Commission on Population and Development, it can not only contribute on combating violence against women, encouraging empowerment of women and protecting their reproductive health, but also on issues related to distribution of land, deepening urban development and international migration. CPD has much to contribute regarding both planning & executing solutions on combating violence against women and providing accessible services to women.

Ms. Lorena Gimenez said, in response to Belarus, it's important, from CSD perspective, to draft law on this issue and put great emphasis on empowerment of women so that they could know their rights and protect themselves. Cross-cutting issue of impunity needs to be tackled by Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. She agreed that statistics are important in identifying problems that are lacking our attention and helping in achieving MDGs.

Mr. Pali Lehola said that it's difficult to measure this phenomenon and there is no instrument to deal with exceptions. Not all important things can be measured. When dealing with issues of domestic violence, secrecy is always a big concern. It's a very emotional and triggering area. We have to make it transparency otherwise it would become intractable. He stressed the importance of entrenching empowerment of women in our common place work. The notion of power-sharing should be extended beyond countries and we need to think how to become impartial by gender. Statistics make problems visible.

Mr. Olivier Belle congratulated ECOSOC's initiative in bringing all the UN system together to discuss this complex issue. He suggested, however, that as the issue needs political attention, this kind of discussion could take place during the Annual Ministerial Review in the presence of ministers. He asserted that this meeting provided a good basis for making the discussion on the subject more pragmatic and there was a value in bringing different commissions together. He reiterated that CSW is committed to work on this issue. The 2009 theme of CSW is "Sharing responsibility of men and women in combating HIV/AIDS." He also pointed out the work of the Security Council on this issue in the context of conflict under the presidency of the United States as an example of a practical step that the United Nations has taken. In concluding, he highlighted some of the key issues that were raised during the discussion that are listed in the outset.

The Chair, **H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima**, in his concluding remarks, talked about his own growing-up experience in an environment where women were abused and stressed that society would not progress unless this violence against women is ended. We need to change the mentality of people in society and create fair policy to protect women's rights. Women need to have true belief in their own ability and overcome the difficulties to process. Without women's participation in development, society will not progress smoothly.