



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Third Committee

Agenda item 28: Advancement of Women

United Nations, 13 October 2010

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT by Ambassador Anda Filip, Permanent Observer of the IPU

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women is a veritable pandemic: seven out of every 10 women experience some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. No society is spared from this form of violence, which manifests itself everywhere - in the home, in the workplace, in the street and in school, in peace time and in times of conflict.

Well aware that initiatives aimed at eliminating such violence require sustained and systematic efforts, in 2008 the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) launched a campaign and programme of work to support parliaments in their action to put an end to violence against women. Through this undertaking, the IPU and the parliaments of the world have joined forces with the UN Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

The IPU's strategy is premised on the view that the political leadership of parliaments and men and women parliamentarians can drive change. The IPU is convinced that parliaments have a key role to play and seeks, through this project, to address the concerns and meet the specific expectations of parliaments and parliamentarians. After all, it is incumbent on them to pass laws to prevent and crack down on all forms of violence against women and girls.

But parliamentary responsibility does not end with the mere passage of laws. Parliament and its members can use their oversight function to monitor the enforcement of laws and public programmes aimed at combating violence against women and gauge enforcement against set objectives and standards. The tools at their disposal, in particular their powers to make budget allocations and set up parliamentary committees, allow them to play that decisive role.

In order to sensitize parliaments and their members to these questions and strengthen their action to counter gender-based violence, the IPU has thus far organized three regional seminars for European, Latin American and Arab parliaments. Those events gave rise to in-depth discussions, an exchange of experiences and the identification of common strategies to tackle similar situations and specific forms of violence affecting all the countries in a given region.

The Arab parliaments considered that their top priority was to legislate on violence against women. They felt strongly that legislation should criminalize acts of violence against women in all contexts

and provide for preventive measures, assistance to victims and the reintegration of perpetrators into society. They proposed to launch a regional campaign as a component of the IPU's campaign to sensitize the public to the problem and prompt requisite legislative measures in the region.

In Europe, parliamentarians were made aware of the situation and specific needs of migrant women and the question of gender-based persecution and asylum at a conference on migration and violence against women. They drew up a list of seven practical/follow-up measures for parliaments, including guaranteeing access to the justice system and providing assistance to all women who are victims of violence, irrespective of their nationality or legal status.

The Latin American parliaments identified mechanisms for ensuring the effective enforcement of laws to counter violence against women, in particular by examining the budget from a gender perspective and assessing the impact of laws against appropriate indicators. They undertook to make adequate budget allocations to coordinate the activities conducted by all stakeholders involved in combating violence against women and heighten their awareness.

The ability of parliamentarians to convince political leaders and shape public opinion is also crucial. The IPU encourages parliaments to organize events on or around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November. In 2009, 33 parliaments organized some 50 activities to mark the Day, and thus heightened the visibility of the problem at the national level. As a result, it became a priority on the political agenda. This year, we call for parliamentary mobilization on 25 November under the theme *Building partnerships to combat violence against women*.

Lastly, at the national level, the IPU provides technical assistance, notably to those parliaments that are seized with bills on violence against women or those that are drafting a relevant law.

All of these activities, often conducted in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW), are part of a wider process to support parliaments in their efforts to ensure enhanced enforcement of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and a review of discriminatory provisions in existing laws.

Distinguished Chair,

We applaud the establishment of the new UN entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women, and the appointment of Michelle Bachelet at its helm. This sends a powerful message about women's rights in the world. We are pleased to learn that combating violence against women is one of Ms. Bachelet's priorities. We would like to assure her of the determination and commitment of the IPU and parliaments and of our willingness to help her take on this challenge.

Thank you.