



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-seventh 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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by Centro de Investigación Social, Formación y Estudios de la Mujer and Red Venezolana de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo Social, non-governmental organizations 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

In Venezuela we are witnessing a rapid deterioration in civic coexistence and an uncontrolled expansion of social violence, including violence against women.

We need a change from the dominant policy of centralization and exclusion to one of inclusion and decentralization to which all interested and relevant parties can subscribe—governmental, non-governmental and academic—and one that can formulate, evaluate and monitor the necessary legislation, plans and programmes, so that women's human rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela of 1999 shall not remain a dead letter but become tangible and verifiable reality, beyond rhetorical and advertising manipulations.

Special mention should be made of the disappearance of the old Bicameral Women's Commission of the defunct National Congress. This has created a vacuum in the National Assembly that affects the elaboration and implementation of the public equality and non-discrimination policies contained in the Constitution.

Among the urgent tasks are: reforms to the penal and civil codes to comply with the Constitution; reform of the Social Security Law to extend social security benefits to all housewives, even though that is already provided under the Organic Labour Law; incorporation of gender parity into the Law on Suffrage and Political Participation and the Political Parties Law; and monitoring and follow-up of the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence, as it constitutes progress in that regard. The major drawbacks of that law do not reside in its content but in its inadequate enforcement, and in particular the difficulty of prosecuting and punishing perpetrators owing to misinterpretation of the law by judges and the lack of training and subsequent systematic evaluation of the officials called upon to enforce it on a day-to-day basis.

In the context of the universal periodic review of Venezuela carried out by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations with headquarters in Geneva between 7 and 11 October 2011, the Venezuelan Observatory on women's human rights was present and doing advocacy work with the evaluating States by providing them with a report containing answers to queries.

Of 148 recommendations made by the working group to improve the human rights situation in Venezuela, 43 referred to issues relating to women's human rights. The issue of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, was among those most thoroughly dealt with, with 12 recommendations intended to: strengthen the fight against crime and violence; ensure the independence of the judiciary; provide training on women's human rights to police officers, judges, prosecutors and defenders; provide legal assistance and protection to victims and investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators; prevent and interdict trafficking in women; and guarantee the rights of women prisoners.

That being so, we find it noteworthy that among the recommendations rejected by the Venezuelan government was one that urged it to take steps to eliminate violence against women, ensuring that offenders were prosecuted and punished, and to abolish stereotypical attitudes and patriarchal behaviour patterns that undermine women's human rights. It could be considered that the provisions of the Organic

Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence do guarantee that right; but judicial practice and impunity show otherwise.

We of the Venezuelan women's organization reiterate our desire for Venezuelan public bodies responsible for equality and non-discrimination policies to fully implement the Convention and the Constitution, to enhance their institutional efficiency and to open up a democratic and inclusive dialogue in favour of the human rights of all Venezuelan women and girls, and for those seeking election as new national, regional and municipal authorities to make a commitment to Venezuelan women and girls that they will have an absolute guarantee of the right to equality and non-discrimination and a life free of violence.

We will now point out the urgent tasks facing these authorities under the law:

- To develop and urgently implement a national plan for gender equality and equity, including prevention of and response to violence against women
- To reform the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence based on an evaluation of its implementation and enforcement and the results thereof and with the participation of all public and civil society institutions concerned with the institutional path provided by the law
- To draft and approve the Regulations under the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence, in order to unify case response and management procedures
- To allocate an adequate budget to governmental and non-governmental institutions, whether national, regional or local, that support women victims of violence
- To guarantee access to justice and women's right to live free from violence by creating enough special prosecutors on violence, courts on violence against women, prevention and care centres for women victims of violence, and shelters
- To devise and implement ongoing training plans and programmes on psychosocial care, the administration of justice and education for civil servants in order to eradicate violence against women in collaboration with the Venezuelan Observatory on women's human rights and other government organizations with a legitimate role in that regard. These organizations serve as the voice of organized self-employed women, both at the national level and in the regions, municipalities and parishes. They must also include follow-up, monitoring and evaluation
- To provide for adequate guaranteed funding for ongoing training plans and programmes for staff working in the justice system (especially prosecutors and judges in cases of violence against women) on the relevant legal framework (national and international), the gender perspective and the psychosocial elements of the problem of the violence perpetrated against our women
- To convene timely, broad-based meetings of governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions to draw up joint plans and programmes to eradicate violence against women
- To review social policies, and in particular those on violence against women, in order to mainstream the gender perspective so that all levels may contribute

resources to address the problem and present the results of their analysis to the competent authorities, and ensure access to that information

- To decentralize resources for the development of regional policies that will enable women's institutes or service organs of each State to meet the general and specific needs of the population in this regard, to guarantee Venezuelan women and girls the right to a life free of violence as established in the Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence
- To take into account new forms of urban violence spawned by increasing social violence, aimed especially at women and the secondary victims grieving for the dozens of young people killed each weekend nationwide
- To develop a reliable information system to record data on the status of women in Venezuela, disaggregated by sex, and do follow-up thereon
- To enforce accountability on Venezuelan public bodies responsible for policies on equality and non-discrimination against women, in a transparent and public manner, and to provide institutional resources to non-governmental organizations whose mission it is to provide services and exercise social oversight

To incorporate a gender perspective into prevention policies; this will include the transformation of sexual stereotypes of women, girls, men and boys and the integration of gender equality into families, schools and communities. It will also include a therapeutic approach to victims and perpetrators, as well as the transformation of patterns in future generations.

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