



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

**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 African Women’s Development and Communication Network, Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women, Femmes Afrique solidarité and Women in Law and Development in Africa, 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**

Violence against women and girls constitutes a gross human rights violation of the physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and economic integrity of African women and girls. It must be recognized and duly elevated to crisis status requiring a swift and proportional response by Member States and all relevant stakeholders.

We recall commitments by Member States to end violence against women and girls in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) on women, peace and security and resolutions 1261 (1999), 1379 (2001) and 1612 (2005) on children in armed conflict:.

We also recall additional commitments within African human rights instruments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Protocol on the Suppression and Prevention of Sexual Violence against Women and Children adopted at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We remain deeply concerned that implementation of the aforementioned commitments has received little political support, and has been underprioritized and underresourced by African Governments.

Following a regional non-governmental organization expert consultation for Africa in preparation for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 November 2012, African civil society experts from North, East, Central, West and Southern Africa recommend the following actions as a matter of urgency.

### **To Governments**

#### **Prevention of violence against women and girls**

- Embed issues of gender equality and prevention of violence against women and girls in school curriculums from early childhood level, in order to inculcate a culture of respect for women and girls' rights. It must be an evidence-based curriculum on how to effect behavioural change, and must incorporate clear definitions of key terms and concepts. Targeted education for women and girls, families, teachers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, the security sector, men and boys should also be facilitated. We urge Governments to implement this approach in both formal and informal education within five years.
- Ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace processes, including in early warning mechanisms, to prevent violence against women and girls in conflict situations.
- Commission evidence-based research on the economic cost of violence against women and girls to create incentives for meaningful Government involvement and ensure that the national budget makes adequate provision for, and

subsequently finances, service providers working in the area of preventing violence against women and girls.

- Create enabling environments to protect women and girls, including those with special needs such as those with disabilities or living with HIV, migrants and widows, at policy and service delivery levels, across all ministries and departments. Ensure that every sector, including the private sector, is aware of its role in preventing violence against women and girls.

### **Response to violence against women and girls**

- Establish minimum standards for the services available to respond to survivors' needs, including formalizing Government procedures and policies to create multiple, comprehensive centres for survivors of violence at each critical level to provide medical care, reporting, shelters, follow-up care and psychosocial support, ensuring minimal cost and burden to the survivor.
- Scale up, adopt and replicate best practices that are in line with respective national contexts to end violence against women and girls and make them part of a national programme. Ensure that women and survivors are actively involved in these efforts.
- Establish functional gender units at police stations and train police officers and other service providers to respond effectively to violence against women and girls.

### **Ending impunity**

- Create special courts to address violence against women and girls, with defined guidelines and procedures. This should be done by expanding the jurisdiction of existing courts, organizing special sessions, establishing mobile courts or appointing special prosecutors. Facilitate access to those courts by women at no cost and train women in self-representation.
- Incorporate violence against women and girls into the criteria for establishing the ethics and integrity of individuals seeking public office in order to challenge issues of impunity
- Nominate a special rapporteur on violence against women and girls in each country to monitor and evaluate Government response to violence against women and girls.

### **To civil society organizations**

- Collaborate on and share best practices and standards for eliminating violence against women and girls. Tap into existing strategies that have proven to be effective, e.g., engaging with men on positive masculinities, community-based approaches using law to empower community members and for responding to violence, social contract models which support those within affected communities to dialogue, negotiate and generate social contracts among varying individuals and stakeholders, including men and women, elders and youth and between different ethnic communities.
- Research and conduct comprehensive studies on violence against women and girls employing a survivor-centred data collection approach, which will

include the true cost of violence against women and girls for communities and persons and the national economy, to facilitate advocacy by civil society organizations.

- Conduct sustained advocacy around violence against women and girls as a crisis, including its intersections with development, governance, peace and security.
- Institute early warning mechanisms for violence against women and girls in the context of conflict and post-conflict situations.

**To development partners**

- Provide realistic, long-term financial and technical support that facilitates sustainable, home-grown interventions to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

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