



## **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 Federation of Cuban Women, 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.



## Statement

The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1997, is a grass-roots organization that was established in 1960. Its membership includes more than 4 million women, representing 88.1 per cent of Cuban females over 14 years of age, in 81,000 community-based organizations. It has a long history of defending and promoting all human rights and gender equality. For more than 50 years, it has worked cohesively with other institutions and organizations for the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, the priority theme of this session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In analysing this theme, it is first necessary to place it in the context of the real picture before humanity today. The ever greater division between social classes, wars, militarization, the progressive power of multinationals, the exploitation of the most dispossessed human beings, the high-speed destruction of nature and the growing degradation of the environment, among other factors, contribute to promoting violence against women and girls in various parts of the world.

At the same time, we cannot refer to the priority theme on the agenda of this session without explicitly stating that the Federación, as part of Cuban civil society, has been witness to the protection that the Government and State of Cuba provide to the people in general to ensure that we Cubans fully enjoy all human rights without distinction or discrimination on any grounds. The main obstacle to that endeavour is the oft-denounced economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America against our country, designed to sow discontent and make Cuban families cave in as a result of hunger, deficiencies and scarcity and move towards capitalism in the political system which we, the majority of this country's inhabitants, have chosen.

Nonetheless, in response to that hostile policy, Cuban women today, who, along with all the people, are actors in and beneficiaries of the Revolution's social justice project, are engaged in modernizing the economic model to perfect socialism with a view to attaining a society characterized by the greatest possible degree of justice. Our support for the political system we are enjoying was demonstrated by the high voter turnout indexes in the first round of the October 2012 general elections in Cuba, an example of democracy.

The theme in question cannot be addressed without mentioning that for 14 years, the mothers, wives and daughters of five Cuban families have been victims of violence caused by the policies of the United States Government against Cuba. Since 1998, five Cubans have been unjustly held in prison in United States territory. They and their families have suffered inhuman and degrading treatment, in violation of a number of United Nations conventions and the Constitution of the United States itself, merely for fighting against terrorism and attempting to protect our people, its men and women, girls and boys, from its consequences.

Despite economic constraints in Cuba, thanks to the political will of our Government and State and to joint action by agencies, organizations and institutions, women have achieved internationally recognized success. Today, violence against women, while it exists, is not a problem that pervades our society and it does not occur on the same scale as elsewhere in the region and other parts of the world.

Nonetheless, the Federación, since its inception, has worked to provide training on this issue and its prevention in order to ensure that the phenomenon is dealt with properly and the right action is taken.

Every year, our organization commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. We promote activities to highlight the preventive and educational work we are doing, one of the challenges facing the Federación today. Our aim is to contribute to the preparation of the family as the nucleus of society; cultivate values, decent attitudes and a spirit of solidarity; strengthen the family's primary responsibility for child care, and the education and upbringing of their sons and daughters; and strongly denounce all forms of violence.

To that end, spaces for debate and reflection on various manifestations of violence against women, its causes and consequences, have been created, with emphasis on communities. The Federación's 174 counselling centres for women and families play a vital role in that regard. We empower grass-roots organizations to play a role in detection, counselling and systematic care for women living in situations of violence, and we have strengthened our interaction with other agencies and organizations to denounce gender violence. Furthermore, as in other agencies and organizations, the Federación provides a means for lodging complaints and receiving replies to them.

Meetings with women being held in prisons and penitentiaries are organized to discuss the various forms that violence takes and what to do in each case. Journalists are trained on how to treat gender violence in the media. At the community level, we hold workshops on gender equality. We run radio and television spots denouncing violence in alternative, national and provincial media. Among our many initiatives, we address this issue in our magazines, *Mujeres* and *Muchachas*, on television programmes "Cuando una mujer" and "De tarde en casa" and in the Radio Progreso programme "Nosotras".

In turn, State policies and the activities of civil society organizations which, like the Federación, have vast experience in community work emphasize well-being, health, peace and security, access to education, the provision of services, food security, the prevention of delinquency, access to decent work, and responsible motherhood and fatherhood, and they promote gender quality and the empowerment of women.

New laws are emerging in our society, with an adequate gender focus and for the benefit of the people in general, to provide men and women full opportunities for human development on an equal footing. We appreciate, for example, that the new Immigration Act promotes the well-being and unification of the whole Cuban family, residing in the country and in other parts of the world. Moreover, among the improvements introduced by the recently adopted Decree-Law 300 on granting land in usufruct, once the construction of housing on leased land is approved, the family is permitted to participate in agricultural work and the women in each family unit have full access to decent work.

When the States Members of the United Nations decided to work together to establish the Millennium Development Goals, many of those Goals had already been achieved in our country. Women and girls enjoy the same human development opportunities as men and boys, despite the persistence of some subjective and

cultural sexist stereotypes which have formed over the years, at times stunting the professional development of women and their participation in public life.

Today the world is witness to our people and thus our families, and with them, our women and girls, achieving progress, growing stronger and continuing to be examples of unity and solidarity for other peoples, despite the obstacles imposed from abroad and more recent ones such as Hurricane Sandy, which Cuban men and women had the will to resist and overcome. The Federación de Mujeres Cubanas expresses its thanks for all the assistance provided to our people from abroad in the aftermath of this meteorological phenomenon in our country.

The Federación is prepared to support and work with the United Nations in the struggle to eliminate all types of violence against women.

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