
Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fourth session

1-12 March 2010

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third 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: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by Third World Institute (ITeM), 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.

Thirty years after adopting the CEDAW and 15 years after the Beijing World Conference on Women, women all around the world still struggle for gender equality and respect of their human rights and freedoms. Despite certain progress, discrimination against women still prevails in all spheres of public life. The UN Member States still have not fully implemented their commitments for gender equality as an essential condition for sustainable economic and social development.

ITeM is the host organization of the international secretariat of Social Watch, a network of civil society coalitions in over 70 countries monitoring anti-poverty and gender equity policies since 1995. The Social Watch reports are based on the findings of citizen organizations around the world monitoring their own governments and the analysis and processing of international

* E/CN.6/2010/1

statistics. Social Watch computes yearly a Gender Equity Index to provide an internationally comparable benchmark of progress towards equity in education, economic empowerment and political voice for women.

The evolution of the Gender Equity Index shows that in most countries, notable achievements have been accomplished as regards women's political participation and establishing gender quotas, inclusion in the labour market, developing institutional mechanisms for gender equality and legislation to address gender equality and violence against women, in particular domestic violence and trafficking.

However, there is evident gap between legislation and implementation. The Social Watch national coalitions report on setbacks in the struggle against poverty and for gender equality. The current financial and economic crisis has exacerbated gender inequalities throughout the world. This regression is also stressed in the UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2009. It concludes that the crises may also hold back progress towards gender equality, by creating new hurdles to women's employment. Their weaker control over property and resources, over-representation in piece-rate or vulnerable employment, lower earnings and lower levels of social protection make them, and their children, more vulnerable to the financial and economic crisis.

The reactions to the economic crisis have involved cutbacks in financing social services, as health care, child care, social protection and education in many countries. These cuts have contributed to increasing risk of feminization of poverty. The estimates are that women will enter the post-crisis period with a heavier burden of unpaid work in a family and more difficult access to decent jobs and social services, if their rights and need will be not effectively and fully protected, as demanded by the international human rights documents.

What is also worrying is absence of women's participation in solving the crisis and in economic decision making. Gender equality machineries, women's groups and women-experts are, by a rule, excluded from the process of shaping economic decisions and context at both national and international level.

The Social Watch national reports indicate that both the national and the international responses to the global crisis present gender-unaware, business-as-usual approaches including a further deregulation and liberalisation of markets and trade as solutions to dilute the crisis. The lack of reference to the States' accountability for their commitments to implement international human rights standards suggests that States consider that they may lessen them in times of crisis.

The CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the other human rights standards, should provide a binding framework for accountability of states and non-state actors, as well as international financial institutions. The accountability mechanisms should include gender based statistics, gender responsive indicators, and gender responsive budgeting for use along with a human rights-based approach to strengthen women's empowerment and contribute to achieving

gender equality and social justice. The road map to prosperity for all is to invest in people and gender equality.