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## **Commission on the Status of Women**

### **Fifty-fourth session**

1-12 March 2010

Agenda item 3 (a)

**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 and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals**

## **Unite to End Violence against Women**

### **Moderator’s summary**

1. On 11 March 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive panel discussion on the theme “Unite to End Violence against Women”. The Chair of the Commission, Mr. Garen Nazarian, introduced the event. An opening statement was made by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, also made a statement. The panel was moderated by Mr. Roberto Storaci, Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. The panellists were: Mr. Dean Peacock, Co-Director of the Sonke Gender Justice Network and Co-Chair of the Global MenEngage Alliance; Ms. Susana Chiarotti, women’s human rights expert and Director of the Instituto de Género, Derecho y Desarrollo; and Mr. Walter Fülleemann, Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. An issues paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat provided the framework for the discussion.

2. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the eradication of violence against women has become a priority issue at global, regional and national levels. As a result, the number and type of initiatives have significantly increased, good practices have been identified, and multiple stakeholders have been engaged. Despite achievements, violence against women persists in all countries and regions, in peacetime and in conflict, with devastating consequences on individuals, families

and societies. New forms of violence against women are emerging. Certain groups of women continue to be exposed to higher levels of violence, including migrant, indigenous and young women, and those from rural areas or ethnic minorities, as well as those in situations of conflict.

3. The elimination of all forms of violence against women is crucial to the achievement of the strategic goals and targets contained in the Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals. Efforts to implement international obligations and commitments to eliminate violence against women must be reinforced, and many good practices are available, such as ensuring that measures taken are fully implemented, adequately funded, and assessed and modified, as appropriate, to enhance their effectiveness. Women and, in particular, survivors of violence must be an integral part of the development and implementation of all measures taken. Measures to eliminate violence against women must include the promotion of gender equality and the realization of women's human rights.

4. The strong leadership of the Secretary-General in ending violence against women in all its forms, especially through his campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", has galvanized many actors to step up their involvement, and added significant momentum to efforts to prevent and address violence against women at international, regional, national and local levels. It has also drawn attention to the importance of ensuring a holistic, coordinated and cohesive approach to prevention and response. The results and lessons learned through the implementation of the campaign will strengthen areas of cooperation and sharing of expertise.

5. Involving men and boys in efforts to end violence against women is essential. Work with men and boys has expanded and been strengthened worldwide, particularly through civil society groups. Actions such as the fostering of new models of non-violent manhood, educating men about women's rights, and using theatre to insist on accountability of perpetrators and television series to promote changes in men's sexual practices, are increasingly being implemented. Other efforts have targeted men and boys who have perpetrated violence against women and focused on psychological counselling, including anger management. As new initiatives engaging men and boys are being implemented, a body of effective evidence-based programming is emerging that confirms that men and boys can change their attitudes and practices, and take a stand for gender equality.

6. While there has been progress in working with men and boys, these efforts have usually been small in scale and limited in impact and sustainability. To address this challenge, it is necessary to expand these interventions into systematic, large-scale and coordinated programmes. It is also important to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations that work with men and boys and ensure that initiatives include a broad range of strategies that reach large numbers of men. Such work should be guided by the goal of achieving gender equality and advancing women's human rights.

7. During armed conflict, women face risks of sexual violence, injury and displacement. They face obstacles in accessing services and assistance. Despite all the hardships women endure in armed conflicts, they demonstrate their resilience in conflicts around the world, caring for family members and holding communities together. Women should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of assistance programmes in order to increase knowledge of their needs and

priorities, and ensure that they are adequately addressed. Stronger action is needed to ensure women's full and equal participation at all levels of policy- and decision-making, including as mediators and negotiators, and to systematically consult women's groups and networks, in peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. Women's needs, perspectives and capacities should be incorporated in all operational decision-making.

8. Sexual violence is one of the most frequent and traumatic violations that women suffer in times of war. Given the urgency of ending sexual violence committed during armed conflict, the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict is a welcome step. While international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law offer protection to women in situations of armed conflict, these laws are often not implemented or respected. Greater efforts are therefore necessary to promote the knowledge of and compliance with the obligations under this body of law and ensure the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators. Prohibitions of rape and other forms of sexual violence must be included in national law and in military codes and training manuals of arms bearers. Victims of sexual violence must have rapid access to appropriate and adequate medical care and counselling, an appropriate environment in which to report their experiences, and mechanisms for redress. The work of the international criminal tribunals and the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes, including sexual violence, are important in ending impunity. A growing number of countries have adopted national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, thus confirming the important role of that resolution in strengthening national policy frameworks.

9. Many countries have carried out legal and policy reforms which have resulted in strengthened and more comprehensive legal and policy frameworks to prevent and address violence against women. Good practices include provisions in national constitutions which enshrine the right to a life free from gender-based violence and/or prohibit violence against women; and comprehensive legislation on violence against women, which calls for the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, and mandates support and protection for victims/survivors, as well as prevention measures. Some laws address multiple forms of violence against women, while others focus on one form of violence, such as domestic violence, human trafficking, female genital mutilation/cutting or forced marriage. Legislative improvements also cover stalking, sexual harassment and kidnapping of women, and local regulations have been promulgated to ensure implementation. States have revised or amended different types of laws to incorporate provisions on one or more forms of violence against women, including criminal, civil, family, labour and asylum laws.

10. Dedicated policies and strategies on violence against women have provided overarching frameworks to enhance coordination among relevant entities and provide time-based targets for activities. Such plans have, in some cases, been in place for many years, been repeatedly updated, and taken into account lessons learned from the implementation of prior plans. Some plans address specific forms of violence, such as human trafficking or female genital mutilation/cutting. Given its many manifestations and broad impact, violence against women is also being addressed in national action plans on health, HIV/AIDS, education and integration/migration. Given its impact on the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals, at least one country has added indicators on violence against women to its national Millennium Development Goal monitoring framework.

11. The effective implementation of laws and policies remains a challenge, especially when funding and capacity are insufficient. Inadequate data on violence against women and the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of laws and policies also persist. Greater efforts are therefore needed to ensure adequate funding for the implementation of all laws and policies; the systematic and sustained training of all relevant officials; and the establishment of intersectoral institutions to monitor and assess the implementation of laws and policies. While many States have established specialized courts, appointed specialized prosecutors, and created specialized police units and police focal points, victims/survivors of violence still refrain from reporting acts of violence and do not have adequate access to mechanisms for redress. Greater accountability for actions taken at all levels, and by all relevant public officials, is therefore essential in efforts to prevent and address violence against women. Likewise, working in partnership with civil society and all other stakeholders to ensure coordinated and sustained action should be systematically pursued.

12. Efforts to prevent and raise awareness about violence against women and counteract attitudes which perpetuate such violence continue, and include national campaigns and changes to educational curricula; publications and websites that inform victims/survivors of their rights and available services; and television, radio spots, art and theatre. The establishment of zero tolerance networks and clubs and innovative measures, such as the appointment of “peace messengers”, are growing. High-level officials are increasingly making public statements condemning violence against women and calling for its end. However, attitudes and practices conducive to violence against women still persist and continue to perpetuate a “culture of silence”. Leadership at all levels — local, national, regional and international — and by all sectors to end all forms of violence against women is critical in generating political will and sustained action to end societal tolerance of, and complicity in, violence against women.

13. There has been an increase in support and services for victims/survivors of violence against women at the national level, including shelters and safe houses, national hotlines and centres that provide information, counselling, support and referral services. The provision of services, including counselling — medical, legal and shelter — in one location has been considered particularly effective and should be expanded. Many women, however, are not able to make use of these services. Further efforts are needed to ensure that all victims/survivors have access to adequate and coordinated services and that such services are sufficiently funded.

14. Inadequate data and statistics on violence against women remains a major gap. More and better quality data, including statistics, on the prevalence of violence against women, reported cases of violence, prosecutions and use/demand of services by victims, are needed. Such data, in particular those gathered through large-scale population-based surveys, are critical to the development and implementation of sound laws, policies and strategies. The work being undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Commission to develop global indicators for measuring violence against women, as well as to prepare guidelines and methodologies for related data collection, is an essential contribution, as such indicators will be an important tool and will enhance improved data gathering. National capacity to collect accurate data

on violence against women should be enhanced, and national statistical offices should systematically have a role in such data collection. A growing number of countries have implemented capacity-building measures for statisticians on violence against women and such training should be strengthened and systematic. The Secretary-General's database on violence against women ([www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase](http://www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase)) provides easy access to measures reported by States. There is also a need for further qualitative research to inform legal and policy development and implementation.

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