

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March

Interactive expert panel on
“Unite to End Violence Against Women”

Thursday, 11 March 2010, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

ISSUES PAPER

I. Background

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, identified violence against women as one of the 12 critical areas of concern that required urgent action to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace. International and regional human rights treaties, documents emanating from United Nations conferences and summits and declarations/resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies, further elaborate States’ obligations and commitments to address violence against women. In response, there has been a growing momentum and commitment to preventing and addressing violence against women in all its forms and manifestations.

The Commission on the Status of Women considered the question of violence against women as part of its follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, including in 1998 and 2007. It held dialogues with the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on different aspects of violence against women. In 2009, the Statistical Commission adopted an interim set of indicators on violence against women. The General Assembly has adopted comprehensive and action-oriented resolutions calling for intensified action by all stakeholders to eliminate all forms of violence against women (resolutions 61/143, 62/133, 63/155, 64/137).

The Security Council addressed the question of women, peace and security in its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) in a comprehensive manner. Subsequent resolutions further elaborated on the issue of ending sexual violence in armed conflict (resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009)) and on women’s engagement post conflict reconstruction and peace building (resolution 1889 (2009)).

In 2006, the Secretary-General issued his in-depth study on all forms of violence against women; and in February 2008, he launched his campaign, *UNiTE to End Violence against Women*. The campaign extends through 2015 and coincides with the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The campaign calls for five key outcomes to be achieved by 2015 in all countries: the adoption and enforcement of national laws, in accordance with international human rights standards; the adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national plans of action; the establishment of data collection and analysis systems; the establishment of national and local campaigns; and systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations. In November 2009, the

Secretary-General launched his Network of Men Leaders to spearhead advocacy and action at the community, national, regional and global levels.

II. Critical issues

Over the past two decades, States have undertaken and/or supported a range of measures to prevent and address violence against women, including strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks; improving availability of services for victims/survivors of violence; engaging multiple stakeholders to prevent violence against women; and enhancing data collection and analysis on violence against women.

Despite these efforts, violence against women persists. It occurs in all countries and regions, in both the public and private spheres, and in peacetime as well as in conflict and its aftermath. Such violence takes many different forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional, as well as economic abuse and exploitation. New forms of violence against women are emerging. Certain groups of women continue to be exposed to higher levels of violence, including indigenous women, young women, and those from rural areas or ethnic minorities.

Efforts to address violence against women are often not comprehensive, consistent or sustained, and there continues to be insufficient coordination among relevant sectors. The scarcity of resources for the implementation of existing measures constitutes a significant barrier to addressing violence against women.

While legal frameworks to address violence against women have been strengthened, discriminatory provisions continue to exist. New laws on violence against women are often inadequately enforced and not well understood by authorities. Women continue to be dissuaded from reporting their cases to the authorities due to fear of secondary victimization by the criminal justice system, stigma in the family or community, complexity of court procedures, and lack of awareness of their rights under the law. The persistence of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate negative stereotypes and gender inequality remains a significant challenge to preventing and eliminating violence against women. Services for victims/survivors of violence are not always available.

Leadership at all levels 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. The engagement of men and boys as partners is essential to ending violence against women. Educational curricula have a key role by promoting women's human rights and gender equality, and condemning violence against women. Public awareness-raising campaigns are vital in exposing and conveying the unacceptability of violence against women.

Comprehensive national action plans/strategies can provide the framework for a coordinated, cohesive and gender-sensitive approach that involves all stakeholders. Such plans should incorporate measurable goals and timetables, monitoring and accountability

measures, and provide for impact assessments. They should also lead to access to adequate and coordinated services for victims/survivors of violence against women.

Knowledge regarding the scope, prevalence, impact and cost of all forms of violence against women remains inadequate and capacity for collecting such data is insufficient. Greater efforts are necessary to collect more and better quality information and data on violence against women to support policy makers to undertake effective legislative and policy reforms, ensure adequate provision of targeted and effective services, monitor trends and progress in addressing and eliminating violence against women, and assess the impact of measures taken.

III. Format of the interactive expert panel

The panel will take the form of an interactive dialogue. Three expert panellists will make introductory presentations of 10-12 minutes. Member States, United Nations system entities and non-governmental organizations will be encouraged to share their experiences and results achieved, as well as discuss specific challenges, and/or respond to the panellists' presentations. Interventions from the floor will be limited to three minutes. A moderator's summary of the dialogue will be prepared and posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

IV. Issues for consideration in the interactive dialogue

The dialogue provides an opportunity to share experiences and discuss strategies for addressing violence against women and achieving the five key outcomes of the Secretary-General's campaign by 2015. It also provides an opportunity to highlight concrete measures for addressing the situation of women in armed conflict. The following issues could be considered:

- What measures and approaches to prevent and address violence against women have proven to be effective and what are the key elements that contribute to their effectiveness?
- What are the main gaps and challenges in existing efforts to prevent and address violence against women, and how could those be overcome?
- How can the Secretary-General's campaign *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* add impetus for change at national, regional and global levels?
- What measures have been effective in protecting and assisting women affected by armed conflict?
- How have men and boys been effectively involved in efforts to eliminate violence against women and what is the impact of men assuming leadership roles in efforts to prevent and address violence against women?