

**Sixty-third session of the General Assembly
Third Committee
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**Introductory Statement
by
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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the Third Committee to present several reports of the Secretary-General under item 56 (a): Advancement of Women, and (b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The momentum for action on violence against women has significantly accelerated since the launch, in October 2006, of the Secretary-General’s in-depth study on violence against women and the subsequent call to action by the General Assembly (in resolution A/RES/61/143).

This is clearly visible from the inputs we received for three reports that are before the Assembly at this session.

The report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, document A/63/214, is based on the contributions of 44 States, and a further 10 States provided inputs after the completion of the report. 40 contributions were received for the report on trafficking in women and girls, document A/63/215, a biennial report. An additional 15 responses have been received after the deadline. Lastly, 29 States provided comments for the report on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations, document A/63/216, with 8 States subsequently submitting contributions.

This year’s report on the elimination of all forms of violence against women focuses on the measures taken by States, as requested in resolution 61/143. The information received confirms that a comprehensive approach is necessary in order to make progress in preventing and effectively responding to this challenge, an approach that needs to be anchored in a strong national framework for the promotion of gender equality. The report therefore recommends, among other measures, that legislation be in place that comprehensively addresses all forms of violence against women, including

prevention measures. It highlights the role of national action plans with measurable goals and monitoring mechanisms and the need for integrated services for victims. Work to address violence against women needs to be adequately funded and supported by leadership at the highest levels. There is an urgent need for regular and systematic evaluation of the impact of all initiatives taken so as to better understand their effectiveness and contribute to the development of good practice. Such impact evaluations should form the basis for corrective action, and consequently, for improved implementation of laws and policies.

Several intergovernmental bodies have responded to the invitation of the General Assembly to discuss the question of violence against women within their respective mandates, and some of them will continue these efforts at future sessions. For example, the Statistical Commission is undertaking work on indicators on violence against women and will continue consideration of related proposals at its session in 2009. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has initiated a review of its 1997 Model Strategies on violence against women. These and similar efforts should be commended and further encouraged.

Last year's report on intensification of efforts to eliminate violence against women focused on the follow-up activities of the entities of the United Nations system to implement resolution 61/143 (document A/62/201). An update on UN system activities was distributed to the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2008, and a further update, i.e. the Inventory of activities, is before the Third Committee, as requested in resolution A/RES/62/133 of December 2007. 22 offices and entities and three inter-agency mechanisms provided contributions about steps taken between February and August 2008. Further information will be submitted to the CSW in March 2009.

Member States have taken extensive measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls (see A/63/215). They have strengthened legal frameworks and put in place strategies for better coordination and cooperation with different stakeholders. Importantly, they have reinforced prevention efforts, and enhanced action to prosecute perpetrators, protect and support victims and collect data. The General Assembly held a thematic debate on human trafficking on 3 June, which helped to generate fresh impetus among Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and fully implement existing international agreements. United Nations entities have stepped up their efforts, and have enhanced coordination and partnerships with a range of actors. The report calls for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive approach to combating trafficking in women and girls, which includes all relevant stakeholders. In addition to legislation that criminalizes all forms of trafficking in persons, prevention and protection and support for victims should also be covered in law. Policies and strategies should incorporate coordination and monitoring measures to support implementation.

Let me turn to the third report before the Committee, namely document A/63/216 on eliminating rape, which was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/134 of 18 December 2007. In addition to Member States, 16 entities of the United Nations system responded to a request for information. The report points to the international

legal and policy framework, the work of expert and judicial bodies, as well as of intergovernmental bodies – most recently the action taken by the Security Council in resolution 1820 (2008), which focused on sexual violence in conflict situations.

The report summarizes measures in place at national level, including those relating to protection; the justice system; specialized support and services for victims; and prevention and data collection. As requested by the resolution, United Nations entities highlighted measures taken to support all efforts to address rape, including through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of data; to integrate the needs of victims into humanitarian assistance programmes; and to provide resources for efforts to eliminate violence against women.

The report concludes that measures to eliminate rape and other forms of sexual violence form part of the holistic approach taken by States towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates

Since I last had the opportunity to address this Committee, the Division has continued to expand its work on violence against women. We are building the coordinated database on violence against women, mandated by GA resolution 61/143, and have recently sent to all Member States a detailed questionnaire to gather information for this database. I encourage all Member States to submit their responses as soon as possible so that the information can be included in a timely manner. We intend to launch the database at the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2009, and will continue to update it as new and additional information becomes available. The questionnaire will shortly become available also in the other UN languages. A brochure on the database has been distributed to delegations.

I am also very pleased that the first issue of our newsletter “Words to Action” on violence against women has been issued. In future, this will be a quarterly electronic publication and we hope that it will complement existing channels of information dissemination. Lastly, I am happy to inform you that we have restructured and significantly expanded our webpage on violence against women, and would welcome feedback and comments.

All of these activities are part of the contribution of the Division for the Advancement of Women to the implementation of the Secretary-General’s Campaign: “Unite to end violence against women”.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

Let me now turn to agenda item 56 (b). The annual report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third

special session of the General Assembly (A/63/217), was prepared in response to Assembly resolution 62/137 and ECOSOC resolution 2006/9.

The report outlines progress made by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and their subsidiary bodies, in advancing the global policy agenda on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The report examines the extent to which these intergovernmental bodies have mainstreamed gender perspectives in their own work. The report also examines the impact of the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women in the work of entities of the United Nations system.

As in past sessions, gender perspectives were most prominent in the outcomes of the 62nd session of the General Assembly in areas such as human rights and social development, while legal, economic and political issues continue to lack systematic attention to gender equality. Considerable progress was made in the area of women and development, and the elimination of violence against women and girls, as mentioned earlier.

During its 2007 session, the Economic and Social Council continued to pay explicit attention to gender equality in some aspects of its work. However, more systematic attention to gender perspectives is needed. Only three of its functional commissions, in addition to the Commission on the Status of Women, incorporated gender equality perspectives in their outcomes. Increased collaboration and consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, which continues to play a catalytic role in advancing global policy on gender equality and women's empowerment, could accelerate such efforts.

The report provides a number of recommendations. These suggest increased and systematic attention to the gender dimensions of all issues discussed by intergovernmental bodies; and integrating gender perspectives into all documentation provided for consideration by intergovernmental bodies. In addition, efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in preparation for thematic discussions and interactive events and in follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits should continue to be strengthened. The report emphasizes the need to enhance the role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy through the systematic transmission of its outcomes to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, to the functional commissions of ECOSOC and other entities of the United Nations, including specialized agencies, funds and programmes, in order to ensure effective support to Member States at the national level.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

Although the Committee is not specifically considering the situation of rural women at this session, I would like to draw delegates' attention to the commemoration of the First International Day of Rural Women on Wednesday 15 October this week, following the adoption of General Assembly 62/236 of 18 December 2007. The resolution recognized the "critical role and contribution of rural women, including

indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty”. The International Day of Rural Women comes the day before World Food Day which this year will focus on world food security and the challenges of climate change and bioenergy.

I would like to inform delegates that the International Day will be commemorated here in New York through a lunchtime panel discussion in CR3 on Wednesday 15th October. Flyers on the event are at the back of the room. I am also pleased to inform you that a new publication in the series “Women2000 and Beyond” focusing on “*Rural women in a changing world: Opportunities and challenges*” will be launched at the event.

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates,

The General Assembly has a critical role in promoting the incorporation of gender perspectives in policy development and effective implementation at the national level. The Third Committee continues to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality in its annual discussions and outcomes. It is hoped that the same commitment will be replicated in other Committees of the General Assembly. It is only through such commitment that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly will be achieved.

The Division for the Advancement of Women stands ready to assist you in your work.

Thank you.