



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/1/NGO/15
28 June 2006

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
First session
Agenda item 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251 OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”

**Written statement* submitted by the International Women’s Rights Action Watch
(IWRAP), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 June 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Statement on Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective

This statement is on behalf of International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP), an international organization based in Malaysia and committed to the domestic implementation of international human rights norms for the realization of women's human rights.

We welcome the newly elected Human Rights Council, an important development in the light of the larger reforms being proposed in the UN, with the aim of greater efficiency and impact in its functioning. We submit our thoughts in the spirit of constructive dialogue with Council, in this its inaugural session.

A key aspect to the application of international human rights standards at the domestic level is active involvement of non-government organisations (NGOs). **Participation of NGOs** in international treaty processes provides an essential link between ground realities (and specificities of women's experiences) and international human rights standards, thus informing the very process implementation of these standards. We trust that the Council will strengthen and institutionalise the participation of NGOs, including making the necessary budgetary allocations.

As a key strategy, we urge the Council to integrate **gender equality** into its work. Ensuring the human rights of women is vital to respecting human rights universally. We encourage the Council to adopt a human rights approach to gender equality using the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention). CEDAW mandates the achievement of substantive equality, including an equality of results. CEDAW provides a definition of discrimination and obligates the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, direct or indirect, by both public and private actors. CEDAW calls for specific and legally binding undertakings of the State to achieve substantive equality and eliminate discrimination against women. The CEDAW Committee monitors these obligations of the State to ensure compliance.

The OP-CEDAW is a particularly important tool and we encourage all states to ratify it. Under the Optional Protocol the CEDAW Committee recently made a decision concerning domestic violence and found that the State party failed to fulfil its obligations under CEDAW.¹ The Optional Protocol can be a potentially powerful tool for the CEDAW Committee to use in ensuring States comply with their obligation to prevent, respond to, protect against, and provide remedies for acts of violence against committed by State and non-State actors.

We trust that the Human Rights Council will renew and strengthen the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on **Violence against Women**. The Special Rapporteur performs important fact-finding activities and issues key reports identifying areas where States are failing in their obligations to end violence against women. We commend the Special Rapporteur for noting in her recent report that States have a duty must not only respond to violence when it occurs but also to address the root causes in order to prevent violence

¹ Special Rapporteur 2006 Report on Due Diligence Paragraph 23

against women. We further commend the Special Rapporteur for noting in her report the impact of the following key areas of women's human rights: 1) the public/private dichotomy in international human rights law; 2) identity politics; 3) global restructuring. Together with the CEDAW Committee, the Special Rapporteur plays an important role in analyzing, monitoring, and holding States accountable for violence against women

Additionally, we urge the Council to reinforce the mandate of the **Special Rapporteur on Health** who continues to do very good work and we commend him for his efforts to incorporate the women's rights perspective in the fulfillment of his mandate.

Finally, we express concern over the rise of extremist expressions of religious and/or nationalist fundamentalists that threaten women's rights around the world. Culture or religion can never justify violence, as was recognized in Vienna in 1993. Globalization also requires special attention be paid to women's rights to ensure that rights continue to progress, and not regress. Women migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to violence and exploitation. In the current climate of globalization and terrorism, women's rights should play an important role as the Human Rights Council begins its work.

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