



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
29 April 2010

Original: English

---

### **Substantive session of 2010**

New York, 28 June-22 July 2010

Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally  
agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality  
and empowerment of women**

### **Statement submitted by Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya, a 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 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

---

\* E/2010/100.



## Statement

### Gender equality and women's empowerment: where is Kenya 15 years after Beijing?

#### Prevailing challenges

1. **Women and health.** Numerous health concerns threaten women in Kenya, including accessing family planning information and services; HIV/AIDS control and prevention; access to antenatal care; maternal mortality especially as a result of unsafe abortion; medical and psychological treatment for gender-based violence such as rape, domestic violence and sexual abuse; and in some areas of Kenya, complications due to female genital mutilation/circumcision. Reproductive health education programmes are disturbingly absent in schools.
2. **Violence against women.** Gender-based violence is rampant in Kenya, with 37 per cent of women suffering multiple or ongoing physical abuse, and reported cases of rape doubling between 1997 and 2003. Domestic violence remains a constant concern, particularly taking into account the failure of the Government to enact legislation concerning domestic violence. Accurate statistics regarding these issues are never easy to estimate considering the stigmatization of what is so widely considered a private family matter.
3. **Women and armed conflict, internally displaced persons.** Post-election violence affects displaced women by depriving them of land registered in the names of their spouses. This is a result of discriminatory land laws that have historically prevented women from registering their own names. This has further contributed to the internal displacement of women.
4. **Women and the economy.** Women's economic security and stability remains weak in Kenya. Though finance programmes for women have come a long way in the past two decades, access to credit is still largely reserved for men. This economic vulnerability leaves married women at the mercy of their husbands and not empowered to choose divorce as a viable option. Failure of the Government to enact legislation on matrimonial property has also contributed to women's economic instability.
5. **Women in power and decision-making.** The percentage of women in power and decision-making roles, though having risen since independence, is still very low. Society also imposes gender roles that designate women to home-making and child-rearing, and this continues to dominate the social consciousness, limiting women's ability to occupy decision-making roles.
6. **Human rights of women.** The absence of nationalization of many of the rights outlined in international human rights instruments stands as proof that the Government of Kenya is not doing everything it can to promote the human rights of women.
7. **The girl child.** The struggles of the girl child in Kenya are truly daunting. She is threatened by harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage and female genital mutilation/circumcision. She runs the risk of defilement by relatives or teachers. The AIDS epidemic has left many children orphaned, some who are HIV-positive. Enrolment rates for girls in schools from primary through post-graduate are still consistently lower than rates for male students. Women's estimated literacy rate of 58.9 per cent and numeric rate of 64.6 per cent from 2007 continue to fall short of men's rates of 64.2 per cent and 67.9 per cent, respectively.