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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*

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: financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by the Coordination française pour le lobby européen des femmes (CLEF)

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2008/1.



Statement

The Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des femmes (CLEF), an umbrella organization for 83 women's associations in France that are active in many areas, is committed to increasing awareness of the underreported needs, activities and advocacy of women in France and elsewhere in the world.

This is especially true of the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and of efforts to increase their participation in peace and post-conflict negotiations in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

CLEF therefore welcomes the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the 2008 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and it expects progress at the session on the following issues:

1. Desiderata

- Raise awareness of the activities carried out by women's organizations in this area, their operating procedures and achievements;
- Publicize information on the proven strengths, abilities and special skills demonstrated by women activists in their activities and participation in negotiations;
- Provide information on the outcome of the foregoing such as their inclusion in the lists of negotiators, trainers or technical advisers for the conduct of peace negotiations;
- Identify the opportunities provided by national and international authorities for women and provide a breakdown by level;
- Draw up an accurate list of States which have actually implemented Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and a list of States which reject the resolution, disseminate such lists and inform the relevant authorities about them.

2. Background

- A few years ago, Mary Robinson had highlighted in a statement delivered at the United Nations during a session of the Commission on the Status of Women, some of the qualities that women possessed which made them eminently qualified to manage conflicts, negotiate objectively and promote the conditions necessary for peace;
- The vast majority of victims in all armed conflicts in the world today are women. They are therefore the persons most affected;
- Moreover, in their daily lives women are called upon to settle disputes between family members. Many of them are also teachers and know how to handle different positions, rivalry and conflicts. This requires the authority of an adult, fully assumed and knowing how to set limits and raise protective barriers while treating their interlocutors as equals. It is not about caving in to the desire to please at all costs or about imposing one's will on others, but rather looking at reality as objectively as possible and dealing with it accordingly. Since time immemorial, women have been forced to grapple with practical problems. They have gained superior experience in this area, which gives them an advantage in seeking solutions;

- These are the qualities required to manage conflicts, by encouraging the various parties to communicate with each other as equals and in a spirit of mutual respect; to be familiar with everyday life on the ground; and to understand that the others have their own reality. While realities may differ, they must all be respected. Negotiations may succeed if they are based on these principles and on the awareness that each person has his/her reality and that no one will have everything he/she wants;
- Once one begins to despise others, to preach hatred and to justify violence, peace becomes elusive;
- There are, of course, women who are violent and full of hatred. It is just that today they are far fewer than men who are violent and full of hatred, most likely because the latter are often used to getting what they want by force. That is why we believe that the more women are involved at the highest levels in all negotiations for the establishment and maintenance of peace, the more likely it will be to achieve and sustain peace, while war and violence will be perceived as the worst possible outcome for everyone;
- Most women do not want their children or the children of others to die. Most women understand that no cause can be sustained after death. The majority of the victims of wars today are civilians rather than soldiers, i.e. women and children. We only need to look at current and recent conflicts in Algeria, the Sudan, Haiti, Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia and so many others. Most of the persons killed, mutilated, maimed, traumatized and assaulted were and continue to be women and children. Therefore, women truly have an interest in laying the groundwork for and promoting peace.

3. For the future

- Upbringing and formal education are the basic factors for development. All teaching of hatred of others must be prohibited. Each child who is detested to the extent of being taught that violence has any value, becomes completely useless to himself and is useless to his society, his people, cause and to humankind. Therefore, school textbooks which spread hatred and violence are crimes against children. They must be condemned publicly at the international level;
- Women are better off not taking up the causes of their husbands. Doing so has never led to the slightest improvement in their status. They have an important stake in promoting peace, which is reflected in Security Council resolution 1325 (2005). Let us at last give them the chance to do so;
- For the record, the world premier of an excellent recent documentary was held at the United Nations on 30 October 2003. Its title is a play on words: "PEACE X PEACE" (suggesting peace which promotes peace and piece by piece). Please contact editor@peacexpeace.org with the subject line DOC INFO for more information;
- More recently (April 2005) a video entitled "Femmes en résistance" (Women who resist) was produced in France under a partnership between public institutions (including the Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation de Lyon, France) and private organizations in coordination with

the association Femmes ici et ailleurs (femmes.ici.et.ailleurs@wanadoo.fr,
telephone/fax: +33 (0)4 37 43 02 35);

- We will bring this video and try to find a room in which to show it at the next session of the Commission.
