



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2012
English
Original: French

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the 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

Statement submitted by NGO Coordination post Beijing Switzerland, 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 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

In Switzerland, since 1981, the principle of equality between women and men has been enshrined in the Federal Constitution. In 1997, Switzerland ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and, in 2008, the Optional Protocol thereto. However, this important legal framework has not yet succeeded in eradicating gender violence against women and girls.

Since 2003, laws protecting against violence have been adopted in some cantons. Those who commit conjugal violence may now be expelled from the home. Moreover, a law passed in 2012 prohibits female genital mutilation, and forced marriage has recently become illegal. A national action plan against human trafficking was also launched in 2012.

These laws are insufficient, however. Gender violence is still being legitimized for historical, cultural, religious or normative reasons. Two women die each month in Switzerland from domestic violence. Genital mutilation is practised on girls, although it is prohibited by law. Migrant women who are victims of gender violence still find no real shelter in Switzerland, not to mention that they are kept in a state of dependency and vulnerability under the current laws on migration.

A real effort at prevention would keep girls and women from becoming victims. A greater investment in preventive actions will produce gains for an economy forced to bear the continuing cost of the damage done by violence. Lastly, preventive efforts play an important role in the evolution of socio-political norms. It is therefore absolutely essential for States to invest more in prevention.

The causes of gender violence can be found in the power imbalance between the sexes. Only when women and men are treated as equals, whether structurally, socially or economically, will gender violence be combated successfully. Therefore, NGO Coordination post Beijing Switzerland recommends the stricter enforcement of article 5 (a) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.