



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 November 2012

Original: English

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 ABANTU for Development, Association of African Women for Research and Development, Coalition nationale de Guinée pour les droits et la citoyenneté des femmes, Groupe pivot: droit et citoyenneté des femmes and Third World Network-Africa, non-governmental organizations 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

We, women of West African women's organizations participating in the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Considering the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 which states, in its article 5, that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,

Considering also the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 18 December 1979, which is the basic women's charter, and its Optional Protocol of 6 October 1999,

Considering further article 18 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 26 June 1981 requesting all States parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and protect women's rights as stipulated in international declarations and conventions,

Noting the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 11 July 2003 requesting States parties to take all necessary and appropriate actions for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women,

Noting also the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989,

Satisfied with the laws, settlements and initiatives taken in West African countries for combating violence against women,

Concerned at the fact that despite the existence of international and regional legal conventions and instruments signed and ratified by the majority of West African States, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted by African Heads of States in 2004 and the adoption of a national gender policy and operational action plans by a number of States, discrimination and violence against African girls and women still persist, including rape, paedophilia, incest, early marriage, symbolic violence, sexual harassment and abuse of all sorts,

Concerned also at the rise of conflicts and the intensifying insecurity in some West African countries, particularly in the north of Mali and northern Nigeria, as well as the threat of renewed fundamentalist menace that calls into question women's rights and security,

Concerned further at the flagrant abuse of key provisions of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) with regard to women's involvement in the management of crises and armed conflicts,

Noting that despite important legal instruments and efforts made at the country and international levels, West African women and girls are still facing prejudices and customary practices due to the misinterpretation of religious precepts, limited knowledge of their rights, lack of access to justice, the culture of silence, stigmatization of the victims and lack of sufficient shelters for women and girl survivors of violence,

Noting also the limited operational capacities of communities and civil society in planning and the mobilization of political support and the necessary resources for change of attitudes,

Convinced that Africa cannot build its future by leaving the majority of its female population stranded and exposed to gender-based violence, which is now the leading cause of disability of girls and women between the ages of 16 and 44 in all parts of the world,

Committed to mobilize more for the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls,

Hereby call on:

The Economic Community of West African States:

- To ensure that national laws and international conventions are harmonized and that the implementation of laws on violence against women and girls is effective by 2015
- To implement all useful provisions for the restoration of peace, rule of law and the safety of persons and goods in conflict areas, particularly in Mali and northern Nigeria
- To ensure a significant qualitative and quantitative representation of women in decision-making and negotiation bodies during conflicts and after the transition period and in the national reconstruction process
- To help countries in pre- and post-conflict situations to apply the basics for sustainable education and strengthen their provisions in terms of gender equality, a culture of peace and security

The Governments of West African countries:

- To speed up the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by 2015
- To increase the provision of shelters for survivors of violence for women of all walks of life (urban and rural) and ages
- To provide incentives and outreach, and educational and social infrastructure for the reintegration and economic empowerment of women and girl survivors of violence
- To remove the obstacles to access to justice by women and girl survivors of violence by facilitating procedures and issuing medical certificates free of charge by 2015
- To empower organizations fighting violence against women and girls so they can intervene as civil plaintiffs by 2015
- To establish national observatories and a database on violence against women and girls as well as adopt provisions for women and girl survivors of violence in conflict and post-conflict areas to receive reparation for the crimes committed against them

- To make provisions for implementation mechanisms such as budgetary support, the creation of specific institutional mechanisms to monitor implementation and the collection of statistical data on violence against women and girls

Actors of civil society:

- To increase the synergy among actors intervening in the fight against violence against women and girls
- To raise awareness on violence against women and girls, particularly with regard to vulnerable groups (minorities, people living with HIV, people with disabilities, landmine victims, displaced and refugee women, rural women, etc.)
- To control and monitor the effective application of provisions and decisions taken by the Government for combating violence against women and girls
- To create specific space for and involve men in combating violence against women and girls
- To question Government and call ministers to account on their commitments, and hold briefings and hearings in parliament to convince and engage Members of Parliament and political leaders
- To monitor cases of violence and follow up those committed to court so that women and girls can obtain justice

Technical and financial partners and the international community:

- To strengthen organizations' access to resources in order to ensure effective management of issues related to violence against women and girls and more comprehensive care for the more vulnerable survivors of violence
- To streamline the funding procedures in order to ensure better access by civil society organizations to the technical and financial services needed to improve their communication and responsiveness
- To provide enhanced support to the activities of civil society organizations in terms of advocacy, wider awareness-raising among the population, and protection and defence of women and girl survivors of violence
- To follow and support the efforts to achieve peace in West Africa, especially in Mali, and support women's effective representation in management of crisis before, during and beyond
- To establish a support fund for the prevention of violence as well as for assistance, counselling and empowerment of survivors of violence