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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-fourth session

1-12 March 2010

Agenda item 3 (a)

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: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Unite to End Violence against Women

Moderator’s summary

1. On 11 March 2010, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive panel discussion on the theme “Unite to End Violence against Women”. The Chair of the Commission, Mr. Garen Nazarian, introduced the event. An opening statement was made by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, also made a statement. The panel was moderated by Mr. Roberto Storaci, Vice-Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. The panellists were: Mr. Dean Peacock, Co-Director of the Sonke Gender Justice Network and Co-Chair of the Global MenEngage Alliance; Ms. Susana Chiarotti, women’s human rights expert and Director of the Instituto de Género, Derecho y Desarrollo; and Mr. Walter Fülleemann, Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross. An issues paper prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat provided the framework for the discussion.

2. Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, the eradication of violence against women has become a priority issue at global, regional and national levels. As a result, the number and type of initiatives have significantly increased, good practices have been identified, and multiple stakeholders have been engaged. Despite achievements, violence against women persists in all countries and regions, in peacetime and in conflict, with devastating consequences on individuals, families

priorities, and ensure that they are adequately addressed. Stronger action is needed to ensure women's full and equal participation at all levels of policy- and decision-making, including as mediators and negotiators, and to systematically consult women's groups and networks, in peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. Women's needs, perspectives and capacities should be incorporated in all operational decision-making.

8. Sexual violence is one of the most frequent and traumatic violations that women suffer in times of war. Given the urgency of ending sexual violence committed during armed conflict, the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence

Development Goals, at least one country has added indicators on violence against women to its national Millennium Development Goal monitoring framework.

11. The effective implementation of laws and policies remains a challenge, especially when funding and capacity are insufficient. Inadequate data on violence against women and the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of laws and policies also persist. Greater efforts are therefore needed to ensure adequate funding for the implementation of all laws and policies; the systematic and sustained training of all relevant officials; and the establishment of intersectoral institutions to monitor and assess the implementation of laws and policies. While many States have established specialized courts, appointed specialized prosecutors, and created specialized police units and police focal points, victims/survivors of violence still refrain from reporting acts of violence and do not have adequate access to mechanisms for redress. Greater accountability for actions taken at all levels, and by all relevant public officials, is therefore essential in efforts to prevent and address violence against women. Likewise, working in partnership with civil society and all other stakeholders to ensure coordinated and sustained action should be systematically pursued.

12. Efforts to prevent and raise awareness about violence against women and counteract attitudes which perpetuate such violence continue, and include national campaigns and changes to educational curricula; publications and websites that inform victims/survivors of their rights and available services; and television, radio spots, art and theatre. The establishment of zero tolerance networks and clubs and innovative measures, such as the appointment of “peace messengers”, are growing. High-level officials are increasingly making public statements condemning violence against women and calling for its end. However, attitudes and practices conducive to violence against women still persist and continue to perpetuate a “culture of silence”. Leadership at all levels — local, national, regional and international — and by all sectors to end all forms of violence against women is critical in generating political will and sustained action to end societal tolerance of, and complicity in, violence against women.

13. There has been an increase in support and services for victims/survivors of violence against women at the national level, including shelters and safe houses, national hotlines and centres that provide information, counselling, support and referral services. The provision of services, including counselling — medical, legal and shelter — in one location has been considered particularly effective and should be expanded. Many women, however, are not able to make use of these services. Further efforts are needed to ensure that all victims/survivors have access to adequate and coordinated services and that such services are sufficiently funded.

14. Inadequate data and statistics on violence against women remains a major gap. More and better quality data, including statistics, on the prevalence of violence against women, reported cases of violence, prosecutions and use/demand of services by victims, are needed. Such data, in particular those gathered through large-scale population-based surveys, are critical to the development and implementation of sound laws, policies and strategies. The work being undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Commission to develop global indicators for measuring violence against women, as well as to prepare guidelines and methodologies for related data collection, is an essential contribution, as such indicators will be an important tool and will enhance improved data gathering. National capacity to collect accurate data

on violence against women should be enhanced, and national statistical offices should systematically have a role in such data collection. A growing number of countries have implemented capacity-building measures for statisticians on violence against women and such training should be strengthened and systematic. The Secretary-General's database on violence against women (www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase) provides easy access to measures reported by States. There is also a need for further qualitative research to inform legal and policy development and implementation.
