Commission on the Status of Women  
Fifty-fourth session  
1-12 March 2010  
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: review of the implementation of the  
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the  
outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution  
to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of  
the Millennium Development Goals  

Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society,  
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

1. Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) is an international organization of sociologists dedicated to improving women’s lives and creating feminist social change. Through our teaching, research, publications and activism, we educate and sensitize the sociological profession, other scholars and the public with regard to the social, political and economic problems of women. We publish a highly regarded professional journal, Gender & Society, and a quarterly newsletter, “Network News”, and maintain a website, www.socwomen.org, that publicizes resources for the sociological community and beyond. Recent scholarly work in Gender & Society examines the issues of women and war, intimate partner violence, human trafficking and prostitution, female genital mutilation and women in United States prisons.

2. As sociologists dedicated to improving women’s lives, we strongly affirm strategic objective D.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action, aimed at preventing and eliminating physical, sexual and psychological violence against women and girls. Sociological research has underlined the social origins of violence against women and girls and the need for Government intervention to protect vulnerable members of society. In this regard, we express dismay over continuing and egregious violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, particularly the vicious sexual attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These organized attacks have targeted young girls as well as women, causing massive physical, psychological and social damage to the health and well-being of women and girls. Armed combatants attack with impunity, confident that they will not be held accountable by police or judicial authorities. The international response to such

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5 Lawston, Jodie Michelle, 2009, “We’re all sisters’: Bridging and legitimacy in the women’s antiprison movement”, Gender & Society, 23(5).


7 Mirchandani, Rekha, 2006, “‘Hitting is not manly’: domestic violence court and the re-imagination of the patriarchal state”, Gender & Society, 20(6).


blatant and organized use of rape as a weapon of war has been inadequate and ineffective, as illustrated by the Rwandan case. The Beijing Platform for Action, in its strategic objective D.1, calls on States to prevent and punish acts of violence against women, and we strongly emphasize the pressing need for States to fulfil their responsibilities towards women and girls in conflict situations. In order to improve the international response to violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other situations of armed conflict, we urge renewed attention to strategic objective E.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action: increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation. The Platform’s paragraph 142 sets out the comprehensive agenda needed for the attainment of that objective.

3. The vulnerability of women to rape and other forms of violence begins in girlhood. A girl child is denied access to a healthy and meaningful life through such mechanisms as sexual abuse; incest; rape; limited educational opportunities; early entry into the labour market, both paid and unpaid; early marriage; and early pregnancy. Gender discrimination in health and nutrition occurs throughout the life course of a girl child. For instance, the under-five mortality rate for girls exceeds that for boys in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, resulting in millions of “missing girls” in those regions. Malnutrition affects girls much more than boys, stunting their future physical and mental growth. Increasing rates of relationship violence and sexual harassment of the girl child impede a healthy relationship with her body and prevent her from making her maximum potential contribution to society. We urge renewed attention to the appeals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action in its strategic objective L.5, for the elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition, and its strategic objective L.7, for the elimination of violence against girls.

20 Hall, Julie, 2000, “It hurts to be a girl: growing up poor, white, and female”, Gender & Society 14(5).
4. When girls are subjected to systematic maltreatment and exploitation, the stage is set for abusive attacks on women, such as rape, in situations of armed conflict. We applaud Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which, according to the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, changed the image of women in conflict situations from that of exclusively victims of war to that of active participants as peacemakers, peacebuilders and negotiators (see S/PV.5294). SWS looks forward to the tenth anniversary of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and can assist the international community in the areas identified by the Special Adviser as needing improvement: raising awareness about gender disparities, incorporating gender perspectives into decision-making and advocating for women and girls.