

2004/11

Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

The Economic and Social Council,

Endorses the following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session with respect to the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality:

1. The Commission on the Status of Women recalls and reiterates that the Beijing Declaration¹ and Platform for Action² encouraged men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality and urged the establishment of the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the community, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. The Commission also recalls and reiterates the outcome document³ adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century”, which emphasized that men must take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality.

2. The Commission recognizes that while men and boys sometimes face discriminatory barriers and practices, they can and do make contributions to gender equality in many capacities, including as individuals and as members of families, social groups and communities, in all spheres of society.

3. The Commission recognizes that gender inequalities still exist and are reflected in imbalances of power between women and men in all spheres of society. The Commission further recognizes that everyone benefits from gender equality and that the negative impacts of gender inequality are borne by society as a whole and emphasizes, therefore, that men and boys, through taking responsibility themselves and working jointly in partnership with women and girls, are essential to the achievement of the goals of gender equality, development and peace. The Commission recognizes the capacity of men and boys to bring about change in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making, which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.

4. The Commission acknowledges and encourages men and boys to continue to take positive initiatives to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender equality, including combating violence against women, through networks, peer programmes, information campaigns and training programmes. The Commission acknowledges the critical role of gender-sensitive education and training in achieving gender equality.

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*

(United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

² *Ibid.*, annex II.

³ General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

5. The Commission also recognizes that the participation of men and boys in achieving gender equality must be consistent with the empowerment of women and girls, and acknowledges that efforts must be made to address the undervaluation of many types of work, abilities and roles associated with women. In this regard, it is important that resources for gender equality initiatives for men and boys do not compromise equal opportunities and resources for women and girls.

6. The Commission urges Governments and, as appropriate, the relevant funds, programmes and organizations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, civil society, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to take the following actions:

(a) Encourage and support the capacity of men and boys to foster gender equality, including by acting in partnership with women and girls as agents for change and providing positive leadership, in particular where men are still key decision makers, responsible for policies, programmes and legislation, as well as holders of economic and organizational power and public resources;

(b) Promote understanding of the importance of fathers, mothers, legal guardians and other caregivers for the well-being of children and the promotion of gender equality, and the need to develop policies, programmes and school curricula that encourage and maximize their positive involvement in achieving gender equality and positive results for children, families and communities;

(c) Create and improve training and education programmes to enhance awareness and knowledge among men and women of their roles as parents, legal guardians and caregivers and the importance of sharing family responsibilities, and include fathers as well as mothers in programmes that teach infant childcare and development;

(d) Develop and include in education programmes for parents, legal guardians and other caregivers information on ways and means to increase the capacity of men to raise children in a manner oriented towards gender equality;

(e) Encourage men and boys to work with women and girls in the design of policies and programmes for men and boys aimed at gender equality, and foster the involvement of men and boys in gender mainstreaming efforts in order to ensure improved design of all policies and programmes;

(f) Encourage the design and implementation of programmes at all levels to accelerate a sociocultural change towards gender equality, especially through the upbringing and educational process and by changing harmful traditional perceptions of and attitudes regarding male and female roles in order to achieve the full and equal participation of women and men in society;

(g) Develop and implement programmes for pre-schools, schools, community centres, youth organizations, sport clubs and centres and other groups dealing with children and youth, including training for teachers, social workers and other professionals who deal with children, in order to foster positive attitudes and behaviour with regard to gender equality;

(h) Promote critical reviews of school curricula, textbooks and other information, education and communication materials at all levels in order to

recommend ways to strengthen the promotion of gender equality that involves the engagement of boys as well as girls;

(i) Develop and implement strategies to educate boys and girls and men and women about tolerance, mutual respect for all individuals and the promotion of all human rights;

(j) Develop and utilize a variety of methods in public information campaigns on the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, including through approaches specifically targeting boys and young men;

(k) Engage media, advertising and other related professionals, through the development of training and other programmes, on the importance of promoting gender equality, the non-stereotypical portrayal of women and girls and men and boys and on the harm caused by portraying women and girls in a demeaning or exploitative manner, as well as on the enhanced participation of women and girls in the media;

(l) Take effective measures, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, to combat the growing sexualization of, and use of pornography in, media content and in the rapid development of information and communications technology, encourage men in the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, combat information and communications technology- and media-based violence against women, including criminal misuse of information and communications technology for sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and trafficking in women and girls, and support the development and use of such technology as a resource for the empowerment of women and girls, including those affected by violence, abuse and other forms of sexual exploitation;

(m) Adopt and implement legislation and/or policies to close the gap between women's and men's pay, and promote reconciliation of occupational and family responsibilities, including through the reduction of occupational segregation, the introduction or expansion of parental leave, and flexible working arrangements, such as voluntary part-time work, teleworking and other home-based work;

(n) Encourage men, through training and education, to participate fully in the care and support of others, including older persons, persons with disabilities and sick persons, in particular children and other dependants;

(o) Encourage the active involvement of men and boys, through education projects and peer-based programmes, in eliminating gender stereotypes as well as gender inequality, in particular in relation to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, as well as their full participation in prevention, advocacy, care, treatment, support and impact evaluation programmes;

(p) Ensure men's access to and utilization of reproductive and sexual health services and programmes, including HIV/AIDS-related programmes and services, and encourage men to participate with women in programmes designed to prevent the transmission and treat all forms of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections;

(q) Design and implement programmes to encourage and enable men to adopt safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour and to use effectively

methods to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS;

(r) Encourage and support men and boys to take an active part in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence, especially gender-based violence, including in the context of HIV/AIDS, and increase awareness of men's and boys' responsibility in ending the cycle of violence, inter alia through the promotion of attitudinal and behavioural change, integrated education and training prioritizing the safety of women and children, the prosecution and rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence and support for survivors, recognizing that men and boys also experience violence;

(s) Encourage increased understanding among men of how violence, including trafficking for the purposes of commercialized sexual exploitation, forced marriage and forced labour, harms women, men and children and undermines gender equality, and consider measures aimed at eliminating the demand for trafficked women and children;

(t) Encourage and support both women and men in leadership positions, including political leaders, traditional leaders, business leaders, community and religious leaders, musicians, artists and athletes, to provide positive role models of gender equality;

(u) Encourage men in leadership positions to ensure equal access for women to education, property rights and inheritance rights and to promote equal access to information technology and business and economic opportunities, including in international trade, in order to provide women with the tools to enable them to take part fully and equally in economic and political decision-making processes at all levels;

(v) Identify and fully utilize all contexts in which a large number of men can be reached, particularly in male-dominated institutions, industries and associations, in order to sensitize men on their roles and responsibilities in the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women, including in relation to HIV/AIDS and violence against women;

(w) Develop and use statistics to support and/or carry out research, inter alia, on the cultural, social and economic conditions that influence the attitudes and behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls, their awareness of gender inequalities and their involvement in promoting gender equality;

(x) Carry out research on the views of men and boys on gender equality and their perceptions of their roles, through which further programmes and policies can be developed, identify and widely disseminate good practices, and assess the impact of efforts undertaken to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality;

(y) Promote and encourage the representation of men in institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;

(z) Encourage men and boys to support the equal participation of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution and in post-conflict peace-building;

7. The Commission urges all entities within the United Nations system to take into account the recommendations contained in the present agreed conclusions and to disseminate the agreed conclusions widely.

*47th plenary meeting
21 July 2004*