

ORAL STATEMENT DELIVERED IN THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

Palais de Nations (Geneva), United Nations, 6 March 2009

Topic: The economics of the financial crisis: gender equality and the role of women

Thank you, Mr President

I make the following statement on behalf of the Spanish Society for International Human Rights Law (SSIHRL), UNESCO Etxea and the Working Group on the Role of Men and Boys in Advancing Gender Equality of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva (CONGO)

The human right to peace and the gender equality as means to overcome the current economic and financial crunch

The spreading global financial crisis - which has taken a heavy toll of international bankers, investors and speculators - is also having a devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society, including women and children.

As indicated by Mr. Sha Zukang, under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs at the 53rd session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) on 2 March 2009, "Historically, economic recessions have placed a disproportionate burden on women".

Rachel Mayanja, U.N. special adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, told the CSW that the confluence of the global financial crisis - including a projected global economic slowdown, the food and energy crises, the rise in unemployment, instability and hostilities, and violence against women and environmental deterioration - had already seriously impacted progress towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Policy responses to the financial crisis must take gender equality perspectives into account to ensure, for example, that women as well as men can benefit from employment creation and investments in social infrastructure.

The role of men and boys is indispensable in achieving both gender equality in economic, social and cultural rights and the human right to peace. The Charter of the United Nations was the first international instrument to recognize women's equal rights with men and has created the impulse in providing a legal codification of these rights in the international human rights treaties and national laws. It follows that a transformed partnership based on equality between

women and men is needed as a condition for people-centred sustainable development and world peace.

In these times it is advisable that governments include in their recovery economic plans the following five core feminine values in order to overcome the current economic crisis and to ensure social peace:

- First value, “*risk awareness*”: women will not invest in things that they don’t understand.
- Second value, “*profit with principles*”: women like a wider definition of economic profit, which have a positive social and environmental impact.
- Third value, “*emotional capital*”: when women invest, they do an emotional due diligence and are capable of looking at directly the people.
- Fourth value, “*straight talking*”: women believe the language of finance should be accessible, and not part of the alienating nature of banking culture.
- Fifth value, “*independence*”: women would like to see women increasingly financially independent, because with that comes the greatest freedom to be who you want to be.

The most critical deterrent to the human right to peace and the economic gender inequality, however, is the prejudice and bias that remains in the mental attitudes and behaviour of many men that perpetuate the notion of power that deprives women of the enjoyment of their basic human rights and human dignity. It follows that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. As indicated by the preamble of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women “the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.”

Thank you, Mr. President

Happy International Women’s Day

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