

**NGO Consultation**  
**CSW at 51: Making Girls Visible**  
**held at New York University (NYU)**  
**25 February 2007**

**Presentation by Carolyn Hannan, Director**  
**Division for the Advancement of Women**

Madame Moderator  
Colleagues and friends

I take this opportunity to give all participants a warm advance welcome to the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). I particularly welcome girls who are attending this session as representatives of NGOs and look forward to hearing your voices during the Commission.

The Division for the Advancement of Women has had a long and very positive tradition of cooperation with the NGO community around preparations for the CSW, including through joint events on the themes held prior to the CSW each year and collaboration on coordinating the many parallel events organized by NGOs during the CSW sessions. This year has been no exception and I would like to thank the Chairperson of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Ms Jackie Schapiro and the Executive Committee - Denise Scotto, Sharon Altendorff, Ewa Richter, Wei Shan Huang, Sam Cook, and the Members at Large, Nancy Lewis, Diane Paravazian, Leslie Wright, Vivien Pender and Bani Dugal for the excellent collaboration in the preparation for this session of the Commission. I would also like to express warm appreciation to the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, in particular the Co-Chairpersons - Hourig Babikian, Anne Scholz, and Carolyn Donovan - for their excellent work in preparation for this session of the Commission.

NGO and civil society groups and networks have always been key stakeholders in the policy development at global level, in particular through the Commission. This is well recognized and has often been commemorated and celebrated. What is less well recognized and perhaps also less well utilized is the key role civil society plays in ensuring full implementation of policy outcomes at national level. The role of civil society in holding governments responsible and accountable for global commitments and obligations, and their monitoring and reporting on progress, is critical. We are therefore encouraged by the huge interest of NGOs in participating in this session, with over 4,800 NGO representatives pre-registered.

As the Bureau member, Tom Woodroffe, has already pointed out in the presentation of the work programme for the 51<sup>st</sup> session, the Commission continues its efforts to ensure a strong focus on national level implementation, including through the large number of opportunities for interactive dialogue and exchange of experiences and lessons learned on achievements and remaining gaps and challenges, and examples of good practices. Since the Commission will focus on and adopt agreed conclusions on one

priority theme, rather than two as in the past, there will be an excellent opportunity for a thorough consideration of the theme of the girl child this year. The fact that the Commission will, from this session on, review implementation of the agreed conclusions adopted on a theme at a previous session means that in 2-3 years time the Commission will come back to the theme of the girl child to review progress and identify continuing gaps and challenges. This provides a tremendous opportunity which we should fully utilize.

There will be opportunities for raising critical issues related to the girl child in the review theme for this session, “The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality”, as well as in the emerging issue on violence against women.

### **Preparatory process for the Commission**

The Division supports the Commission in its efforts to ensure a greater impact of its outcomes at national level by disseminating information broadly to promote awareness around the world of the themes the Commission is considering, and encouraging the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in preparatory discussions. This year the Division has had very good collaboration with UNICEF and with the Working Group on Girls. UNICEF and the Working Group have worked to ensure that their constituencies in all parts of the world were informed and involved in as many ways as possible. UNICEF, for example, engaged 150 country offices in seven regions in the preparatory process. We are aware that many other NGOs have also been active in disseminating information on the important theme of eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child and identifying issues, lessons learned and good practices for sharing at the Commission. Many have also made specific efforts to engage girls in the preparatory process.

I am sure there have been many innovative good practice examples developed in this process, such as consultation meetings at national or even regional levels and development of specific materials. I would encourage you to document this for sharing with the Commission through the Division for the Advancement of Women as a means to assist us in improving this process in the future.

To access the experience and lessons learned of researchers, activists and other stakeholders working with the girl child at national, regional and international level in support of the preparation of the Commission, the Division organized an Expert Group Meeting on the theme, in collaboration with UNICEF, at the end of September last year. The report is on the website and you have already been briefed on the findings and recommendations. UNICEF has prepared a child-friendly version of the report which I am sure you will be briefed on.

To reach out to NGOs and other stakeholders, including academics, outside of New York, the Division organized a moderated on-line discussion on the theme, which ran for a month in August/September last year. Approximately 500 individuals working with or concerned about the situation of girls from around the world participated in the

discussion. A summary report is available on the Division's website. This process could be more effectively utilized to bring in the voices of individuals in civil society who will never be able to attend a CSW session. I would encourage you to check the DAW website to get information on the on-line discussion on the next theme of the CSW and spread information and encourage participation from among your constituencies.

These two important processes fed into the preparation of the two reports of the Secretary-General which are the formal basis for the discussions in the Commission, The Secretary-General's report on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (E/CN.6/2007.2) and the Secretary-General's report on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on the priority theme. (E/CN.6/2007/3)

### **Follow-up process**

Implementation of policy outcomes can, of course, only be accelerated at national level if these outcomes are well known and systematically and effectively used. The Division therefore encourages relevant UN entities and NGOs to engage their constituencies around the world in follow-up activities. Innovative approaches are needed to ensure that the outcome of the Commission on the priority theme is broadly disseminated and utilized at national level. It is our hope that UNICEF and other relevant UN entities, as well as the Working Group on Girls and other NGOs, will work systematically, effectively and creatively to promote and document active engagement of their constituencies in follow-up to the Commission and ensure that the policy recommendations on the girl child adopted by the Commission will accelerate the elimination of discrimination and violence. Because the theme has engaged a broad range of stakeholders at different levels in the preparatory process, there potential for developing good practice examples on how the outcome of the Commission can be used at different levels to make a real difference in the lives of girls.

Through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, UN entities are also encouraged to make more systematic and effective use of the outcomes of the Commission. The new working methods of the Commission require the UN entities to report back to the ECOSOC and the General Assembly on the impact the outcomes of the Commission have on the work of their organizations.

I know that you will come back to this issue in the next session when you will discuss "Taking it all back home". I hope there will be further opportunities during the Commission to discuss with a broader group of stakeholder, including Member States and UN entities, how the outcomes can be used at different levels, and how progress can be most effectively assessed and documented when the Commission will review the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the girl child in 2-3 years time.

In conclusion, it is my hope that our work together can make a significant difference in the lives of girls around the world. The Commission's decision to focus on

the girl child was an important and timely one. The preparations for the Commission have shown clearly that girls continue to face discrimination and violence and neglect, often in hidden forms. National statistics in many situations mask serious discrimination and violence against groups of girls in high-risk situations at sub-national levels. The excellent policy and legal frameworks which protect the rights and girls are not effectively implemented and girls priorities and needs are not identified and addressed. It is our responsibility to the girls of today and to future generations to take bold steps to forcefully address this situation.

Thank you.