

FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF CSW

“Dialogue on the Commission on the Status of Women as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming”

New York, 19 March 2015

Comments by Ms. Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine, Member of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Distinguished Chairperson,
Distinguished Member States,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to participate at this dialogue. I very much appreciate this opportunity to share the experience and lessons learned of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in the integration of gender perspectives in our work, the challenges encountered, and opportunities for moving forward.

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council with the mandate to discuss indigenous issues within the Council's mandate relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. It is also tasked to (i) provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations, through the Council; (ii) raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities relating to indigenous issues within the United Nations system; and (iii) prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues. Since its establishment in 2000, the Permanent Forum is recognized as being the largest global gathering on indigenous issues, bringing together indigenous peoples, governments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs in a spirit of partnership and dialogue.

Indigenous women continue to play a key role at the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum. The Forum in turn provides an important platform for indigenous

women to share their experiences, their stories, as well as the challenges they face. Indigenous women have organized their own caucus, and make sure to raise their issues and concerns during the deliberations of the Forum. Indigenous women also use the opportunity to organize events and activities to celebrate and share their achievements and gains.

Since its first session, to address the specific challenges that indigenous women face – often from both within and outside their communities - the Permanent Forum decided that indigenous women is a priority for our work. The Forum devoted its third session to indigenous women, and continues to give this special attention through the annual sessions. The Forum's reports highlight the specific situation of indigenous women according to our thematic focus. This is reflected in the fact that during the past thirteen sessions of the Permanent Forum (from 2002 to 2014), 150 recommendations were adopted that refer directly to the situation of indigenous women.

The recommendations of the Permanent Forum regarding indigenous women and girls address a wide range of issues, including education, culture, health, human rights, environment, climate change, development, conflict, violence, sexual and reproductive rights and political participation. This highlights that the situation of indigenous women is complex, multi-dimensional and cannot be treated in isolation. It needs to be addressed at the substantive, programmatic and policy level. To this end, the Forum's recommendations are addressed to Member States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, indigenous peoples and civil society.

What has emerged during the course of our work, is that the issue of Gender, and in the context of the Forum, that of Indigenous Women needs to be raised specifically to make sure it is discussed, and debated. To this end, Forum members have prepared reports to specifically address the issue of indigenous women e.g. on violence against women and girls¹ and indigenous women's political participation at the international, national and local levels².

The role of our partners has been very useful. This includes Member States, UN agencies, NGOs and above all, indigenous women themselves who have been

¹ Study on the extent of violence against indigenous women and girls in terms of article 22 (2) of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, E/C.19/2013/9

² Study on indigenous women's political participation at the international, national and local levels, E/C.19/2013/10

instrumental in identifying specific areas that deserve special attention through their reports and interventions. One example was the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls, which was consistently raised as a major concern in many if not most countries with indigenous populations. In response, the Forum decided that this should be the key theme for the 2012 expert group meeting, which analysed this issue from diverse perspectives and agreed key findings and recommendations to carry forward our work.

Allow me to thank the States that responded to the specific reference on the situation of indigenous women on the national reviews developed by UN Women and the regional commissions for CSW59. To include this perspective encourages efforts to highlight the remaining gaps and challenges that indigenous women and girls encounter and also will allow States to identify policies and programmes to overcome those gaps and challenges.

We are pleased that two resolutions concerning indigenous women were adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women – (1) resolution 49/7 of 11 March 2005, entitled Indigenous women: Beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and (2) resolution 56/4 of 9 March 2012, entitled Indigenous women: Key actors in poverty and hunger eradication. Resolution 56/4 was a landmark achievement in terms of the recognition of the role of indigenous women and their traditional knowledge in the development process towards poverty eradication, and we count on the Commission on Status of Women to continue to address the specific challenges that indigenous women face.

We also want to bring to your attention the outcome document of the high-level plenary session of the General Assembly, known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.³ The outcome document includes specific references to indigenous women including paragraph 19 on violence against indigenous women and girls, that refers specifically to the Commission on the Status of Women: “*We (Member States) also invite the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the issue of the empowerment of indigenous women at a future session.*”

The lack of a system of data collection and disaggregation by ethnicity and sex makes indigenous peoples in particular women invisible, as a result of the exclusion of

³ A/RES/65/198

indigenous peoples from basic modalities such as birth registries, dead certificates, among others. In this regard, we would like to suggest to the Commission on the Status of Women as well as the Committee on Statistics to take this into account in their work.

Mr. Chair,

In my overview on the inclusion of the gender issue by the Permanent Forum, I spoke in general terms about indigenous women in the policies and projects of the Forum. But I would like to specify that gender is not limited to women. To address the issue we have to look at all the social relations between indigenous women and men. This leads me to say that we should not just deal with the one aspect of the woman in gender issues. It is necessary to see how in the indigenous communities, we can allow equal roles for men and women, equal access to education, health care, and equal pay. But this equality is also built within homes, in the way household chores are shared between men and women without breaking and disrupting indigenous family models, especially as the majority of indigenous women are housewives. Household chores are not paid.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the CSW for this opportunity, and hope that this can be part of an ongoing dialogue with the functional commission in better integrating a gender dimension to our work.

Thank you.