INFORMATION NOTE

Human Rights Council 15th Session (13th September - 1st October 2010)

Elimination of discrimination against women

At the 15th Session of the HRC, the delegations of Mexico and Colombia presented the initiative of a resolution on discrimination against women, to follow up on the mandates of HRC resolution 12/17 (adopted in September 2009) and to build on findings of the thematic study presented by the High Commissioner on the subject. Resolution 12/17 requested the OHCHR to prepare a thematic study on discrimination against women in law and practice and on how the issue is addressed throughout the UN human rights system. The study concluded that a new thematic mandate would contribute to the effectiveness of existing work on the issue. The HRC continue to address the thematic study started on the 14th session, and hold a discussion on the issue in order to consider taking further action on discrimination against women. The content of the draft proposal included an update of resolution 12/17, measures to be undertaken by the HRC on discrimination against women and a proposal for the creation of an independent expert as a special mechanism to further women’s human rights and tackle laws that discriminate against women or are discriminatory in terms of implementation or impact.

The new resolution recognized that women’s inequality has resulted in the lack of equal opportunities for women in all aspect of life (education, access to health, economic and political participation) and it calls upon states to fulfill their international obligations and commitments to revoke any laws that discriminate on the basis of sex, and pay particular attention to women in vulnerable situations, such as migrant women, women with disabilities and belonging to minorities.

Femmes Africa Solidarité joined the network and engaged in advocacy work before and during the HRC last session for the adoption of the resolution, and organized private meetings with Member States of African governments to advocate delegations to support the adoption of the new resolution. On September 24th, during the Annual discussion on integration of gender perspective, FAS, together with Equality Now and World YWCA, delivered a statement addressing the importance for all Member States to adopt Res. 1325 and implement it through National Action Plans. As a result at the end of the session, the HRC adopted by consensus the proposed resolution on discrimination against women, this representing a great success and achievement for all organizations involved and the millions of women beneficiaries.

It is worthy to note that during the previous session, the Council adopted a resolution on “Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in prevention”.

Geneva, 11th October 2010
Maternal Mortality and Morbidity

On September 30th, the second Human Rights Council resolution on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights was adopted without a vote and with support from 95 States co-sponsoring. The resolution welcomes the 2010 OHCHR study that lays out the core principles of a human rights approach to eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. Moreover, it requests the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare an analytical compilation of best practices employing a human rights approach (in addressing the issue) and decides to consider taking further action at the HRC session next year.

The Universal Periodic Review Guinea

During the consideration of the UPR report on Guinea, the Guinean representative stated that a process of national reconciliation had begun in the country. This reconciliation attempt marks an important moment in the country's history, as the government is openly apologizing for historical wrongdoings committed towards the people of Guinea. A new constitution has been formed and the first rounds of elections have gone ahead without problems. The government has also implemented new laws protecting journalists in their work, thus promoting freedom of the press and free speech. Although the government of Guinea has taken note and accepted numerous recommendations, the state feels that in its present situation, it cannot abolish the death penalty.

The French delegation, along with other countries who spoke, commended Guinea's acceptance of most of the recommendations and its willingness to implement them. With great support for the country, the Chinese delegation urged the international community to help Guinea in its attempt to reach international and U.N. standards. However, when the NGOs took the floor, a general consensus indicated that the civil society of Guinea must be strengthened. In particular, the NGO Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Framework stated that the government must strive to guarantee equal protection under the law. Amnesty International greatly encouraged the government of Guinea to abolish the death penalty.

Remarks

During the session, the Council held a number of general debates, including on the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, and thematic reports presented by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office, on human rights situations that require the Council’s attention. The Council heard an update by High Commissioner Navi Pillay on the activities of her Office, followed by a general debate and an interactive dialogue on her annual report.

The Human Rights Council concluded its 15th regular session by adopting 34 texts which included establishing the mandates of a Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; a Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice; and a Working Group to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the regulation of the activities of private military and security companies on the enjoyment of human rights.
Other Activities

Femmes Africa Solidarité participated to Council Session - IE on Sudan, a side event organized by North-South XXI and Liberation Speakers to update the audience and participants on the Human Rights Situation in Sudan. The panelists discussed the report of the independent UN Expert Group on Darfur and the 45 recommendations, out of whom only 4 were implemented. There is an urgent need to push forward to the Security Council the need for the extension of the Mandate of the UN Independent expert Group in order to follow up the implementation of the recommendations shared by the Expert Group.

On September 13, FAS took part to the HRC side event on the launch of the working paper on; ‘The Rights and Guarantees of Internally Displaced Children in Armed Conflict’. The panel discussion stressed that children are the most vulnerable in situations of armed conflict, since they are exposed to all forms of violations, like forced recruitment into the armed forces, prostitution, mutilations, separation from families, among others. During the panel, the paper on; ‘The Rights and Guarantees of Internally Displaced Children in Armed Conflict’ was launched. The paper will be used for advocacy, planning and programming for example in the cluster approach used in the different context and different countries affected by conflict.

For further information please contact networking@fasngo.org