

## 51<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 26 February to 9 March 2007

## Interactive expert panel Key policy initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

27 February 2007

## **Moderator's Summary**

1. At its third meeting, on 27 February 2007, the Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion followed by a dialogue on the theme "key policy initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The panellists were: Ms. Maria Lucia Pinto Leal, Professor of Social Work at Brasilia University, Brazil; Ms. Michal Komem, Programme Manager of Youth Programmes, Association for Planning and

genital mutilation/cutting and early marriage. Participants emphasized the need for targeted policies for the benefit of girls at high risk of discrimination and violence.

3. Participants noted that girls' invisibility was heightened by the social isolation and marginalization of particular communities in which they lived. The challenge of providing equal opportunities to such girls, for example Roma or San girls, was highlighted. Little attention was paid to the needs and concerns of girls living outside of family structures. Furthermore, the needs of girls were often submerged within those of families. As a result, girls' needs, as well as their aspirations and capabilities, were

girls of different age groups, and of girls at risk, was also needed in order to develop better targeted policies and programmes, as well as to enhance monitoring and evaluation. Participants stressed that data needed to be collected and disaggregated at the national and sub-national/local level, as nationally aggregated statistics tended to mask the reality of girls within their communities. Indicators were also needed for monitoring purposes and to better track the impact of policies and progress over time. Attention was drawn to lack of data in different areas, for example the prevalence of different traditional practices.

13. Participants underlined that girls' empowerment was vital to eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child. Education was key, and participants agreed that all efforts should be made to ensure that all girls have equal access to quality education. Examples were provided of education projects as well as awareness-raising campaigns that had led to an increase in the enrollment of girls in low attendance districts, including through improved safety of public streets and schools. Girls' participation in shaping their own future was also considered critical to their empowerment, and should be encouraged and fostered through their active involvement in the development of policies and programmes that directly affected them.

14. The role of men and boys in strategies to eliminate discrimination and violence against girls was discussed. Participants noted that well-developed youth initiatives, such as youth centres, existed in many countries. However, as these rarely had a sex- or age-specific focus, they did not adequately respond to the needs of girls. Successful efforts to support girls at high risk of discrimination and violence existed but these initiatives continued to be small-scale and failed to reach all girls in risk situations. Efforts to enhance justice systems for children and to protect girl victims of violence, for example during criminal proceedings, were also discussed.

15. Participants highlighted the importance of resources to implement programmes aimed at eliminating discrimination and violence against the girl child, especially in developing countries, including through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

16. Participants called for the availability of safe spaces for girls of different age groups, where they could safely interact with their peers, as well as with role models or mentors. Such spaces should exist also outside the family and the school environment. Other structures and mechanisms to support girls were also noted, including community workers, social support networks, counseling, including for vulnerable groups of girls. Participants welcomed the exchange about such good practices as they could be replicated and adapted in other situations as well.