**26th session of the Human Rights Council**

**Annual full day discussion on women human rights**

**Room XX------Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Date: 17 June 2014**

In its resolution 6/30, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed the principle of gender equality and the need for the full implementation of the human rights of women. In this regard, the Human Rights Council holds an annual full day of discussion on women human rights.

The Annual Full-Day discussions will be divided into two panels. The first panel discussion (10:00-13:00) will address the impact of gender stereotypes and gender stereotyping on the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of women’s human rights.

The afternoon panel discussion (15:00-18:00) will focus on the intersections between realizing women's rights and achieving sustainable development, building on the 2013 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Agreed Conclusions, as well as the ongoing discussions of the Open-Ended Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Panel 1: The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on the Recognition and Enjoyment of Women’s Human Rights**

**09:00-12:00**

1. **Focus and objective**

A gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by women and men. Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men.[[1]](#footnote-1)

International human rights law places a legal obligation on States to eliminate discrimination against women and men in all areas of their lives. This obligation requires States to take measures including the enactment and implementation of laws, and policies and to address gender stereotypes both in public and private life as well as to refrain from stereotyping. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides in its article 5 that, “State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Other human rights treaties also require States Parties to address harmful stereotypes and the practice of stereotyping. For example, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) also contains in article 8(1)(b) obligates States to stereotypes and stereotyping, including compounded stereotypes and stereotyping based on gender and disability.

The human rights treaty bodies - such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - and the Special procedures of the Human Rights Council have examined the different forms of gender stereotypes and the practice of gender stereotyping and have also reminded States Parties’ of their obligations in this regard. [[3]](#footnote-3)

For example, in *R.K.B. v. Turkey*, the CEDAW Committee noted that, the “full implementation of the Convention requires States parties not only to take steps to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination and improve the de facto position of women, but also to modify and transform gender stereotypes and eliminate wrongful gender stereotyping, a root cause and consequence of discrimination against women. The Committee is of the view that gender stereotypes are perpetuated through a variety of means and institutions including laws and legal systems and that they can be perpetuated by State actors in all branches and levels of government and by private actors.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In addition, in the case of *Vertido v. The Philippines*, the CEDAW Committee found that in failing to end discriminatory gender stereotyping in the legal process, the Philippines was in violation of the Convention. The Committee noted that, “stereotyping affects women’s right to a fair and just trial and that the judiciary must take caution not to create inflexible standards of what women or girls should be or…have done when confronted with a situation of rape based merely on preconceived notions of what defines a rape victim.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

The Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice has discussed the obligation of States to address stereotypes of women’s capacities and roles that negatively affect all aspects of women’s life in particular their political and public life and undermines progress in eliminating discrimination against women. It notes that stereotypes of women’s capacities in politics contribute to women’s marginalisation in politics and are therefore often responsible for the harassment and attacks women often face in political positions. The Working Group has also addressed discrimination against women based on multiple stereotyping.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Gender stereotyping is an obstacle to achieving gender equality and often results in and/or reinforces discrimination against women and women’s subordinate status. Compounded gender stereotypes can have a disproportionate negative impact on certain groups of women, such women in custody and conflict with the law, women from minority or indigenous groups, women with disabilities, women from lower caste groups or with lower economic status.

While progress has been made by the human rights mechanisms to interpret and clarify States obligation to address gender stereotyping and provide guidance on measures needed to meet this obligation at the national level, there remain a number of challenges and deficits. These challenges include: lack of coherence or consistent use of concepts amongst and between the mechanisms; the absence of data on good practices in addressing gender stereotypes/stereotyping; as well as a lack of clear guidance on States obligations to modify or transform harmful stereotypes and eliminate wrongful stereotyping.

1. **Objectives**

The objective of the discussion is to highlight international human rights obligations related to gender stereotypes/stereotyping; underscore how gender stereotypes/gender stereotyping hinders the achievement of women’s human rights and impedes their human rights; discuss some of the key challenges and good practices in addressing gender stereotypes/stereotyping and to make recommendations for further steps by Human Rights Council, members states, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders on addressing gender stereotypes/stereotyping.

1. **Composition of the Panel**

* **Opening statement:**

Ms. Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights

* **Panelists:**

**Moderator-** Mr. Todd Minerson**,** Executive Director, White Ribbon Campaign

1. Ms. Dubravka Simonovic, Member of CEDAW Committee
2. Ms. Simone Cusack, Australian Lawyer
3. Ms. Veronica Undurraga, Law Professor, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez
4. Ms. Yetnebersh Nigussie,Executive Director, Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD)

**Panel II: Women human rights and the sustainable development agenda**

**15:00-18:00**

1. **Focus and objective**

Sustainable development – comprising social, economic and environmental development – is unachievable without the full realization of human rights and women’s political and economic empowerment underpinned by the full and active participation of women. With a dedicated goal on gender equality, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have played an important role in galvanizing attention to certain critical issues related to women’s rights, for instance in education. However, women continue to be subjected to high levels of violence, unequal access to social and economic resources and opportunities, and are under-represented in decision making spheres. In order to address these gaps, sustain and build on the gains that have been made, it is crucial to identify the gaps in the MDG framework and to develop a holistic and integrated approach to the sustainable development agenda (post-2015), which seeks to ensure women’s rights, empower women, and transform the structural factors that underpin gender inequality.

The second part of this year’s full day discussion will focus on women human rights and the sustainable development agenda. The discussion will enable the Human Rights Council and Member States to take stock of the current proposals for addressing women’s rights in the sustainable development agenda, and highlight the human rights perspective. This is particularly relevant given that in 2013 the General Assembly recognised that human rights should be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda.

1. **Objectives**

The panel discussions will seek broadly to identify the structural inequalities holding women and girls back from realizing their rights, and advance discussions on how gender inequality and violence against women undermine full realization of women’s rights and how these issues should be addressed in the post 2015 sustainable development agenda.

This will include issues overlooked in the MDG agenda such as violence against women, women’s unpaid care work, and women’s rights to social security, women’s rights in conflict situations, and women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. Critically, the panel will also make some proposals as to how the post-2015 sustainable development agenda can elaborate on measureable targets and indicators in these areas, guided by international human rights obligations, including mechanisms for effective data collection and monitoring of specific gender gaps.

The panel will make concrete recommendations to Member States on how to address the gaps in the MDG framework and to develop a holistic and integrated approach to the sustainable development agenda (post-2015), which seeks to ensure women’s human rights, empower women, and transform the structural factors that underpin gender inequality.

1. **Composition of the Panel**

* **Opening statement:**

Ms. Flavia Pansieri, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

* **Panelists:**

**Moderator** – Sarah Cook, Director of UNRISD

1. Ms Saraswathi Menon, Director, Policy Division, UN WOMEN
2. Ms. Frances Raday, Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Discrimination against women in law and in practice
3. Ms. Gita Sen, Professor (Retd), Centre for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore & Adjunct Professor, Global Health and Population, Harvard School of Public Health
4. Ms. Luisa Cabal, Lecturer-in-Law, Columbia University School of Law
5. Kingsley Kariuki, Kenya Federation of Slum Dwellers

**Jointed**

1. **Outcome**

OHCHR will draft a summary of the full day discussions.

1. OHCHR Commissioned Study on Gender Stereotyping as a human rights violation, December 2013 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/WRGSIndex.aspx>. See also, Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack, *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See CEDAW article 2(f) and CEDAW General recommendation No. 25 on article 4, paragraph 1, of the CEDAW Convention, on temporary special measures [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See [CCPR/C/PRY/CO/3 (HRC, 2013)](http://uhri.ohchr.org/document/index/b115063e-9adf-43d4-9bba-3e9586cdd7b7), [A/HRC/14/13 (UPR, 2010)](http://uhri.ohchr.org/document/index/fff4c47f-dbfa-42c7-bba5-5deac41bbee9), [CRC/C/SYR/CO/3-4 (CRC, 2012)](http://uhri.ohchr.org/document/index/15f9231a-476d-4402-b73f-0d8bbad35150) and [A/HRC/19/19 (UPR, 2011)](http://uhri.ohchr.org/document/index/401824e3-ecf3-45d8-82cb-3bcb84428256). CEDAW/C/NOR/CO/8 (CEDAW, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/jurisprudence.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. See also the case of *R. P. B. v. the Philippines*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A/HRC/23/50 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)