

**Francophone High-Level Consultation on Violence against Women
54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, March 1-12, 2010**

Francophone Declaration on Violence against Women

We,

Ministers and Heads of Delegation representing the states and governments of countries using French as a common language, gathered to review fifteen (15) years of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and complementary measures decided in 2000 at the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly,

Based on the commitments made in the Luxembourg Declaration, adopted at the first Conference of Women of La Francophonie in February 2000, inviting member states and governments of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) to strengthen the participation of women in decision making and equality between women and men; and on commitments contained in the Bamako and St. Boniface Declarations, regarding the protection of women during armed conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction, and the promotion of their role in preventing these conflicts,

Based on the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and on all United Nations declarations and resolutions denouncing violence against women and girls between that date and 2009,

Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person,” and that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” and hence all forms of violence against women, men or children are to be condemned,

In the spirit of the Declaration adopted by Heads of State and Government at the IX Francophone Summit devoted to the dialogue of cultures, we confirm our attachment to cultural diversity, and we reaffirm that it cannot be an obstacle to full respect for the rights, values, standards and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

Convinced that the equal participation of women and men in all areas of economic, political and public life constitutes an essential element of democracy and sustainable development, we deem that concrete new measures must be implemented to achieve this objective and to mainstream gender concerns in all fields of endeavour, bearing in mind the diversity of La Francophonie,

Mindful of the process accepted by member states of the United Nations in adopting the Beijing Action Plan in 1995, and the need to assess progress made and challenges to be met after fifteen (15) years of implementation,

Fully, unequivocally and unanimously reaffirming our commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the political declaration and final document adopted in 2000 by the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, while reiterating our determination to pursue our efforts to remove obstacles to fully honouring the commitments made in the twelve (12) areas of intervention identified on that occasion, especially with regard to combating violence against women and girls,

Reaffirming international commitments to gender equality and the advancement of women, made at the Millennium Summit, the 2005 World Summit and other major United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions, and reaffirming also that their full, effective and accelerated implementation are integral to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals,

Mindful that violence against women is a phenomenon common to all societies, and that we must not only combat this violence but also promote equality between women and men, as well as a cultural of human equality, especially by educating people, raising their awareness and encouraging them to change their mentality,

We stress that “violence against women” means “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life,” as described in Resolution 11/2 adopted by the Human Rights Council on June 17, 2009.

We reaffirm that we must firmly combat all human rights violations committed against women and girls, and that such violence constitutes the ultimate form of gender-based discrimination.

We note the persistence of serious violations of the rights of women and girls, such as violence occurring in the family, including all forms of conjugal violence, sexual abuse, all forms of exploitation, all traditional practices harmful to women, including infanticide of girls, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and crimes committed in the name of honour; violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual harassment at work and in educational institutions, trafficking and slavery of women and girls (including sexual slavery), and the exploitation of prostitution; and violence used as a weapon of war in times of crisis or conflict.

We reaffirm that no custom, tradition or religious consideration can be invoked to exonerate us from our obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women, in accordance with the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

We vigorously condemn all acts of violence against women and girls, whether by governments, individuals or non-government agents. In accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, we demand the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence, whether domestic or community violence, or violence perpetrated or condoned by governments. We stress the need to consider all forms of violence against women and girls as criminal offences under the law, and the duty to give victims access to appropriate and effective recourse and special assistance, especially medical and psychological assistance, as well as effective support services.

We note that gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence are included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and that ad hoc international criminal tribunals have recognized that rape can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide or torture.

We reaffirm Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) of the United Nations Security Council on women, peace and security, Resolution 1882 (2009) of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, Resolution 11/2 (2009) of the Human Rights Council and Resolution 64/137 (2009) of the General Assembly, on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

We note that some groups of women — including women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, women without recourses, interned women, women inmates, young girls, women with disabilities, elderly women and women in areas of armed conflict — are particularly vulnerable to violence.

We note that efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls involve the prevention of violence, such as by educating people to respect and acknowledge the equality of women and men; providing protection and support for women and girls who have been victims of violence, including

medical, legal and psychological support; and providing specific and general deterrents by condemning those who commit such violations.

We recognize that it is our responsibility to combat all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in our countries. In particular, we must exercise due diligence in preventing acts of violence aimed at women, investigate these acts, punish their perpetrators, end impunity, protect victims, and establish reliable statistics, data and indicators in this regard to define appropriate intervention strategies.

We subscribe to the need:

- to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of women and girls, especially their rights to liberty, security of person, integrity, equality and dignity,
- to identify the different forms of violence against women and girls, and to collect and analyze appropriate quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to this violence,
- to identify appropriate responses to the issue of gender-based violence and to implement all appropriate measures, including the adoption and implementation of legislative provisions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls,
- to put public policies in place, together with appropriate strategies defined in response to this violence, to co-ordinate national, regional and international efforts to combat violence,
- to promote education for non-violence and respect for human beings,
- to consult and maintain regular dialogue with stakeholders in civil society, and to provide them with the necessary support, especially nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that advocate women's rights, to prevent violence against women and girls, and to raise public awareness of this issue in all public forums (schools, factories, work environments, refugee camps, etc.),
- to adopt measures to eliminate violence against particularly vulnerable women,
- to provide women with means of action and empowerment, including with capacity building, ensuring that women are fully represented and participate fully and equally in decision making at all levels, to eliminate violence against women and girls,
- to protect victims of violence through appropriate information, prevention and awareness measures, and to provide shelter for them in accordance with the means available,
- to train educational, medical, legal, police, gendarmery and military personnel, including peacekeeping personnel regarding specific situations experienced by women and girl victims of violence, as well as their needs, to enable personnel to respond better,
- to promote access for women and girl victims of violence to quality case management services, and to support them in their rehabilitation, social reintegration and re-entry into the labour force, and to promote just and effective reparation,
- to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of these violations by all legal means, and to end impunity, to repair the harm done to women and girl victims of violence,
- to mobilize and raise awareness among men and boys in all initiatives to prevent violence against women and girls.

We recommend that the International Organization of La Francophonie:

- continue all its efforts to promote equality between women and men through education and training,

- help to promote and raise awareness of international provisions related to promoting and protecting women's rights, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, for effective implementation within La Francophonie,
- consolidate its efforts to combat discrimination and violence against women and girls, through a dual preventive and corrective approach toward inequality between women and men,
- consolidate its specific activities to combat discrimination and violence against women and girls, through information, awareness, training and capacity building of women in strategic areas of intervention to achieve gender equality,
- implement necessary measures to gradually and effectively integrate gender-based analysis in all of its programming.

We,

Ministers and Heads of Delegation of states and governments of countries using French as a common language,

Adopt this Declaration of La Francophonie on Violence against Women as a contribution to reviewing fifteen (15) years of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action worldwide, and

Demand that the Secretary General of La Francophonie interpret the Declaration at the 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Headquarters of the United Nations, New York, United States, March 1, 2010