



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 December 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Global Foundation for Democracy and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational strata. Data provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean indicates that 70 per cent of women in the world are victims of different types of violence. In 2013, 1,800 women lost their lives because of gender violence in Latin America. Within the Dominican Republic, the problem has been particularly severe as the Attorney General's Office for Women Affairs recorded that 1,153 women were murdered by their spouses or former spouses between 2005 and 2010. The Office confirmed that over a 9-month period in 2011, 174 women lost their lives as victims of violence. The eradication of such femicides in Latin America and the Caribbean is a daily challenge for citizens and governments in the region, but it can be achieved over the long term with the elimination of certain cultural factors, prejudices, and inequalities of power that sustain them.

The implementation of preventive policies in the short- and medium term is an essential first step in order to induce a sustainable reduction of this crime. These policies should provide legal reforms that criminalize acts of violence but also educate the perpetrators about their actions to ensure their rehabilitation into society. In the Dominican Republic, Law No. 24-97 for the Protection of Women is the result of a January 1997 reform of the Criminal Code, which until then had not sanctioned violence against women. An amendment was introduced with the reform to provide mechanisms for aggressors to get help. Despite this advancement, the Assistant Attorney General for Women Affairs in the country, Roxana Reyes, has confirmed that 80 per cent of Dominican women who died as victims of gender violence in 2013 had not previously reported their aggressors. The positive news though is that extreme violence against women motivated by sexism decreased by 33 per cent in 2013. A gradual plan for the joint implementation of strategic partnerships with the United Nations system and international and local Non-Governmental Organizations is in place to run an efficient service for the safety of female victims and their children. The decrease in violence against women was facilitated by the receipt of 50,000 complaints in 2013, meaning that the partnerships had facilitated a quicker response to save lives. More recently, the Assistant Attorney General has turned her attention to the urban music industry, calling for a culture whereby artists make music with lyrics that do not assault women and therefore support the national effort to eradicate violence against women. "We need to make everyone accountable for their offenses against women; this includes musicians and the strong impact they have on society.

The advances brought about by legal reform should include attention to victims as well as aggressors. Our government in the Dominican Republic noted this need introducing several measures aiming to provide support to victims and educate individuals about gender equality. This includes the signature on October 2, 2014, between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Dominican Teachers Association of an agreement to develop interagency mechanisms to help with curriculum reform, which contemplates education modules for both sexes on gender equality and women's empowerment. This comprehensive agreement also provides training to members of national and municipal bodies of the teaching profession in the Dominican Republic on a wide variety of issues ranging from gender based violence to the reproductive rights of women. Further support is also provided by the national office for victims of sexual abuse, domestic and gender based violence. The office,

which is partnered with the Attorney General's office, is divided into various comprehensive care units that offer free medical, legal and psychological support.

The eradication of violence against women is a priority for the Dominican Republic. In order to meet the aspirations of the recently adopted Post 2015 Development Agenda, it is imperative that we implement policies that assure long term gender equality and women's empowerment in society. Gender equality targets must be accompanied by policies that promote access to education, labour market and economic opportunities and the full political participation of women in society. Recognizing this development need, the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo are dedicated to the promotion of research that seeks to keep these issues on the public agenda. The recent release of the foundations' publication *Status of Women: Studies and Reflections in the Dominican Republic and Latin America* in partnership with the Dominican Political Observatory is a testament to this commitment.

The publication notes that the Dominican Republic has made great progress in achieving gender equality in access to education under the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed, in 2011, for every 100 men enrolled in higher education there were 172 women. Unfortunately, while women enter and remain more years in the educational system, this does not translate into more or better jobs.

The percentage of women in paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector only slightly progressed from 38.6 per cent in 2000 to 41.2 per cent in 2011. This level of female participation in the workforce remains below the average of 44 per cent estimated in 2011 for Latin America and the Caribbean. The higher educational level achieved by Dominican women has not resulted in access to more and better jobs. We need to expand and strengthen programs and initiatives that put women at the centre of their own socio-economic development. This will help women to generate their own income and be productive in society.

The Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo respond to this need through one of their programs, ReCreate, which offers recycled art workshops to women across the country, helping them develop new skills, discover their creative talents, grow their self-esteem, create their own small businesses and learn about sustainability at the same time. The program has been taught to over 2,000 individuals since 2012, including local women groups, schools, non-governmental organizations and many more. In 2014, partnering with 11 different institutions, ReCreate completed 85 workshops in over 10 different cities across the country. The workshops are therapeutic, reinforce the sense of individual worth as well as the sense of community, and offer the foundations for women's independence and active participation in the local economy.

The greater involvement of women in politics has been one of the constant demands of the movement for women's rights in the Dominican Republic. The AmericasBarometer study has shown that national public perception towards the political participation of women is far from being favourable toward either their active involvement or their performance. This has to change. The Dominican Political Observatory points out that between 1970 and 1998 women in the Dominican Republic had barely achieved an average representation of 2.50 per cent in mayorships. In 2006, the regional figures progressed as 17 municipalities out of

151 (11.26 per cent) were headed by women, the highest number reached to date. Unfortunately, the percentage dropped to 7.74 per cent in 2010, with only twelve women elected mayor. In respect to the legislative bodies, Luciana Mermet, the United Nations Development Programme Deputy Resident Representative in the country, compared women representation in Dominican politics to the rest of the world, as they constitute only 20 per cent of the total number of legislators (21 per cent is a global average). The biggest challenge for gender parity is to move toward quality education in government and municipal public policy. This preparation should be based on training and continuing education of the party grassroots and political movements.

The Global Foundation for Democracy and Development and the Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo believe that gender based violence is one of the growing impediments to gender equality and empowerment of women, and therefore to the country's sustainable socio-economic development. The existing legal framework and structures have to be complemented with daily actions on the community and national level where social, psychological and cultural aspects of gender inequality and gender based violence are addressed and dealt with, through education, support groups and other actions implemented by public, private and non-governmental sectors, and offered to women and men equally. This development paradigm, if integrated with principles of environmental sustainability (like the ReCreate workshops), can play a key role in the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

This statement is supported by

Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo

Global Foundation for Democracy and Development.
