

ECOSOC Round Table on Violence against Women

**Intervention by Mr. Pali Lehola,
Chair of the 39th session of the UN Statistical Commission
8 July 2008**

1. The United Nations General Assembly, at its session held in December 2006, adopted a resolution A/RES/61/143, which, in point number 18, requests the Statistical Commission to develop and propose, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, and building on the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, a set of possible indicators on violence against women in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.
2. Complying with this request, the United Nations Statistical Commission, at its 39th session held in February 2008 in New York, adopted a decision on the subject and submitted it to the ECOSOC through its report. It approved the formation of the Friends of the Chair group to conduct an in-depth technical review of proposed indicators to measure violence against women, and requested the group to report back to the Commission at its fortieth session.
3. The Friends of the Chair group consists of experts from Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Ghana, Italy and Thailand. Observers consist of representatives from United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, and the World Health Organization. Mexico was entrusted to take the substantive lead in this effort and to chair the group.
4. In consultation with the Chair, explicit terms of reference were elaborated, which stipulate that the essential assignment of the Friends of the Chair is to enable the Statistical Commission to comply with the request of the General Assembly. The Friends of the Chair will therefore put before the Statistical Commission a set of recommended indicators, together with a detailed technical evaluation, for the Commission to endorse.
5. Furthermore, the terms of reference call for Friends of the Chair to base their deliberations on the proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Indicators to Measure Violence against Women, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 8-10 October 2007. The major outcome of this expert group meeting is the elaboration of an initial list of proposed indicators to measure violence against women. In addition, as both the United Nations Statistical Commission and the United Nations Commission on Status of Women held their sessions simultaneously, a joint dialogue between 39th Session of the Statistical Commission and the 52nd Session of the Commission on Status on women took place on 28 February 2008; it confirmed the appropriateness of this initial list as a starting point for further discussion. The Friends of the Chair will subject these proposed indicators to a rigorous technical evaluation, taking into account national experiences in collecting, processing and disseminating statistics pertaining to the violence against women, bearing

in mind that most of the current national statistical systems are not able to routinely capture this phenomenon in a reliable manner.

6. Finally, based on the Statistical Commissions primary technical role to develop and improve standards and methods of official statistics, the Friends of the Chair will also attempt to suggest ways of how the compilation of the various indicators may be improved, for instance by proposing more rigorous concepts and definitions or by developing the appropriate sources, either administrative records or surveys. Consequently, in its report, Friends of the Chair will also submit to the Statistical Commission a proposal for introduction of regular national statistical surveys on violence against women, with the elaboration of the methodology to be used, the level of disaggregation by age, occupation, education, ethnicity and other social characteristics, classification of violence and its perpetrators, periodicity of the survey and the list of other pertinent variables.
7. At the moment, the work of the Friend of the Chair is ongoing in the form of on-line exchanges of opinions and ideas in respect to:
 - Type of information/statistics required
 - Definitions and concepts of types of violence and the events to include in each one of the different types of violence
 - Reference periods
 - Population and breakdowns (age, kind of relationship)
 - Information collection (sample, type of survey, etc.)
 - Most appropriate collection methods according to the proposed set of indicators
 - Whether the proposed set of indicators are the basic indicators required to measure the prevalence of violence
 - Whether the proposed set of indicators are comprehensive or insufficient and whether they consists of appropriate indicators
 - Whether the indicator of early marriage (before age 18) is an appropriate indicator to be considered in the basic proposal, particularly among less developed countries or if it is strategically and politically inappropriate.
8. The group will orient its review and develop suggestions in order to allow:
 - Identifying and closing gaps.
 - Extending the options.
 - Counting on sufficient elements that might justify the relevance and consistency of the proposed set of indicators.
9. Depending on the results of these exchanges, a possibility of organizing a meeting of the Friends of the Chair will be evaluated later this year, but in time to prepare the report to the Statistical Commission.