

**51st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
26 February to 9 March 2007**

**Interactive expert panel
Elimination of all forms of violence against women: Follow up to the
Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels**

1 March 2007

Moderator's Summary

1. On 1 March 2007, the Commission on the Status of Women held a high-level panel discussion on the theme "Elimination of all forms of violence against women: follow up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels". The panelists were Ms. Yakin Ertürk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; Ms. Carol Hagemann-White, University of Osnabrück, Germany; Ms. Susana Chiarotti, INSGENAR and CLADEM, Argentina; Ms. Aminata Toure, UNFPA; and Ms. Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM. The panel was moderated by Ms. Adekunbi Abibat Sonaïke, Vice Chairperson of the Commission.
2. The interactive panel discussion gave the Commission on the Status of Women the opportunity to examine emerging issues and trends that Member States and the international community as a whole face in addressing violence against women and identify new and effective approaches for addressing such challenges. The interactive panel discussion also allowed the Commission to build on the momentum generated for work on this issue, in particular by the Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women and by the General's Assembly's resolution on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/61/143).
3. Participants agreed that violence against women was a universal phenomenon that adversely affected the lives of women all over the world. It was rooted in *gender inequality and discrimination* against women, continued unequal power relations between women and men and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and values, including in institutional structures at all levels. Participants acknowledged that efforts to address and prevent violence against women had to be prioritized and grounded in work to eliminate discrimination against women. Attention was drawn to the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which establishes measures to be taken by States to address discrimination as the root cause of violence against women. Since violence against women was also an *impediment to development*, participants underlined the need to include measures to combat such violence in national development strategies, including in poverty reduction strategies and strategies to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The need for international cooperation in tackling violence against women was noted.

4. Participants recognized that effectively tackling violence against women required *political will* and courage, and *commitment of resources*. Strong and clear political statements from the highest level of those in public leadership positions were instrumental in removing obstacles to eliminating violence against women. The dearth of resources available for initiatives to combat violence against women was acknowledged and viewed as an indication of a lack of serious commitment.

5. The need for sound *data and research* on causes, risk factors, prevalence and forms of violence against women was highlighted as such knowledge made different forms of violence against women visible, and served as basis for developing informed policy responses, effective laws and support services for victims. Data were also required to compile indicators to measure and track the impact of initiatives to combat violence against women. It was highlighted that even in data-rich countries, there was a lack of effective and comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of measures taken, including due to lack of resources committed to such work.

6. Participants also recognized that violence against women impacted on all aspects of women's lives. Concern was expressed about the inter-generational transmission of such violence, where children who witnessed violence in their homes may be more likely to experience, or perpetuate such violence as adults.

7. Participants stressed that efforts to address all forms of violence against women required a *holistic, comprehensive and well coordinated multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach*. Development and implementation of such an approach required cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders so as to take advantage of their relative strengths. Participants highlighted the importance of working with non-governmental organizations and civil society in developing initiatives for addressing and preventing all forms of violence against women. In this regard, participants recognized that the movement to raise awareness about and address violence against women had been initiated and sustained by women's groups and that grassroots level activists had a wealth of experience on successful interventions.

8. Participants provided many examples of initiatives to address violence against women, at the national, regional and international levels. While recognizing that different cultural settings required different approaches, including to change harmful practices and stereotypical attitudes, participants noted that cultural considerations could not provide justifications for violence against women.

9. At the national level, comprehensive *laws* on violence against women had been enacted that, among other things, broadened the definition of violence against women in light of experiences of women; widened the pool of victims protected by the law; incorporated both criminal and civil provisions, including protection orders; provided victim friendly procedures; incorporated prevention measures and economic and social rights; and established special courts, mechanisms, and/or procedures ensuring speedy justice for victims. The importance of involving women's groups and experts from legal, health, service and academic sectors in the drafting of such laws and policies was highlighted. The need for appropriate institutional frameworks to ensure implementation and monitoring of laws and policies was acknowledged, to enhance women's access to justice and end impunity of perpetrators. In addition, the importance of earmarking resources for work on violence against women in the national budget was emphasized.

11. In the area of *services* to victims/survivors of violence against women, participants emphasized the need to work in concert with, or support the work of, non-governmental organizations who provide such services. Services such as shelters and hotlines and holistic service provision models such as "One-Stop Centers" that provided health services, counseling and legal services in one place were highlighted. At the same time, participants were concerned that lack of funding, or the insecurity of funding, for such services constituted a significant challenge in achieving quality and consistency in service provision.

12. Participants highlighted the importance of initiatives to *prevent* violence against women. Such initiatives had to be aimed at changing patriarchal cultural norms and practices and stereotypical conceptions of gender roles. Prevention strategies included changing stereotypical images of gender roles through working with the educational system and the media, and working with communities, and in particular with men and boys, to change accepted norms and cultural practices. The need to create a public discourse that challenges patriarchal norms was raised. It was suggested that an international study be conducted on male culture and strategies to change patriarchal cultures, which would include a compilation of "good practices" on the role of men and boys in bringing about an end to violence against women and girls. The value of working with non-traditional stakeholders, such as faith-based organizations, trade unions and community leaders, in efforts to prevent violence against women was acknowledged.

13. Among other promising initiatives to prevent and address violence against women were national observatories on violence against women; tribunals for women; multi-sectoral roundtables to guide policy formulation; data management systems; allocation of resources through gender-sensitive budgeting; and awareness-raising campaigns.

14. Participants noted the particular *vulnerabilities of certain groups* of women to becoming victims of violence, such as migrant women, female domestic workers, women living in situations of armed conflict or under foreign occupation and indigenous women. It was noted that poverty and lack of economic capacity could also increase women's vulnerability to violence. The vulnerability of children – and particularly the girl child – to violence called for specifically tailored measures.

15. Participants recognized that the *Secretary-General's study and the General Assembly resolution* had paved the way for all stakeholders to move forward more expeditiously and in a concerted manner by putting in place comprehensive strategies to address and prevent violence against women and eradicate gender inequality. While noting that the issue of violence against women had been on the international agenda for some time, participants acknowledged the need to scale up the response to such violence, and strengthen the follow-up to the momentum generated by the Study and the General Assembly's comprehensive guidance for action. The need to discuss the question of violence against women in different fora of the United Nations in the follow-up to the Study was acknowledged.

16. The establishment of the inter-agency task force on violence against women, within the context of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, to follow up on the Secretary-General's study and the General Assembly resolution was noted. The task force aimed to enhance coordination and strengthen the response by United Nations entities in support of States at the national level to eliminate violence against women; facilitate systematic and timely information exchange among United Nations entities about existing and planned activities; and get greater clarity about resources available within the United Nations system for work on violence against women. The example of the United Nations Trust Fund to eliminate violence against women was presented, which over the ten years of its existence had supported 226 initiatives in diverse communities in over a hundred countries. However, the Trust Fund remained significantly under-resourced and could provide funding for only a small proportion of proposals.