

Contribution by SUSANNA CAMUSSO, Secretary General of Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Education International (EI) and Public Services International (PSI) for the General Discussion at the UNCSW 57

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most appalling global and structural human rights violations. Whatever its shape, it is always due to an abusive and unacceptable behaviour.

One out of every three girls born today worldwide will face some forms of violence in her lifetime.

Violence exists in all societies, all countries, all geographical areas and everywhere affects all society layers and groups of women and girls. In many countries, such as Italy, while general murders show a decreasing trend, researches show that femicides represent a stable data over time and since a long time. On behalf of the international trade union movement, here represented by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Education International (EI) and Public Services International (PSI), representing more than 70 million women workers around the world, we consider necessary to point out that the prevention, contrast and punitive actions undertaken by Governments and relevant institutional actors have not been sufficient to curb the violence up to now. Therefore, violence is a major social problem that is likely to fall into silence when not properly countered: if women do not feel adequately protected, the result is an increasing fear and a more difficulty in complaining. It is definitively sure: a primary answer to that challenge consists in giving women decent work opportunities. As decent work means providing the needed safety, empowerment and autonomy which allow women themselves to openly report against perpetrators. Violence against women takes place mostly in protected areas, such as family, home and workplace. That of the work-related gender violence is a widespread phenomenon still much underestimated. It does concern millions of women and has a disproportionate impact on the groups of vulnerable women such as the domestic, migrant and precarious workers. We express our deep concern about the plight of work-related gender violence denying women their fundamental right to live in dignity and freedom. As trade unions we call for urgent measures to be undertaken at the international level in order to assist women workers to withstand the serious massive violence and to establish a strategy to prevent and eliminate those practices. The CSW 2013 should adopt strong Agreed

Conclusions which includes a strong commitment to develop a time bound Global Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Girls, having a particular focus on the prevention of violence, providing monitoring and operational guidance regarding the existing international obligations, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. Gender inequalities and discrimination exacerbates violence. Along five years of deep economic and social global crisis, working obstacles, problems, blackmailing situations and pressures have increased for most women. Crisis is being used as an excuse to scale back workers' rights and eliminate jobs, weakening women's status and legal protection at work. The existing labour market structure, either preventing women participation or making them more and more precarious, represents a major hindrance for women's autonomy and empowerment.

Privatisation, structural readjustment and various “austerity” measures have entailed the loss of important public services and public service jobs. Since in many countries there is a high concentration of women in public sector jobs, women are disproportionately affected as workers and as owing to their dependency on public services. In addition, the overall cuts in public spending have negative impacts on the effectiveness of prevention measures and social services provided to victims of violence. The elimination of violence requires strong intervention from public authorities to design and implement appropriate prevention measures, to ensure legal protection and the prosecution of cases and to provide support and compensation for the victims. For this reason, we think that a three-directions global action should be adopted and implemented, without further delay, both in cultural and institutional terms. The first one should be prevention: focusing on education of girls and boys, women and men, launching public campaigns on issues of respect for person, safety in the cities, regulations protecting women subjected to violence, counselling centres for people in need. Secondly, counteracting violence and ensuring certainty of punishment. Thirdly, guaranteeing assistance to those who suffered violence. In other terms, ensuring that women can fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. As violence against women and girls is a defeat for everybody.