



ECOSOC Assembly

Speech of the AICESIS President Antonio MARZANO

on the Theme

“On gender equality and women's empowerment”

New York, July 2010

Thank you Mr President,

Authorities,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to be participating in the general debate of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

My intervention is on behalf of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, which ECOSOC has recognised as an Intergovernmental organisation.

Indeed, AICESIS has invested a significant attention in recent months in the issue you have selected for your general Assembly.

Namely the impact of ongoing global trends and challenges on gender equality and women's empowerment.

AICESIS represent the diversity of civil society vis-à-vis political institutions in almost 60 Countries in the world.

And it is natural that our Association should focus specially on the issue of gender equality, which not only has fundamental right but is also a prerequisite for development.

We have focused particular attention on progress made and on the challenges that remain in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 15 years after its adoption in 1995.

In this regard, I wish to emphasize that AICESIS has contributed to the General Assembly of the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) in the 2005 session (Beijing +10) and recently in the 2010 session (Beijing +15)".

We are aware that this anniversary comes at a time of serious economic and social hardship for millions of women and men, in the North and South of the World.

Women and men who have fallen victim to a financial crisis which, in 2009, sent global economic production plummeting to levels not seen since the end of the Second World War.

But the crisis makes it all the more necessary to take vigorous action to ensure that gender equality objectives are met.

In truth, gender equality has many facets, which call for a global approach.

This is undoubtedly a matter for Governments in developed as well as developing countries.

Nevertheless, the social partners also contribute to promoting equality through social dialogue and collective bargaining.

As does all civil society which, given the nature of the issues being addressed, should also be able to play a significant role.

A document discussed by the bodies of the AICESIS revealed that, despite some progress, grave gender inequalities persist.

In industrialised countries, the problem of reconciling professional and family life, and the pay gap, go hand in hand with the individual and collective empowerment of women at work, in institutions and in society.

In developing countries, appreciable progress has been noted in recent years towards greater gender equality in the context of development.

However, there is still room for concern, as shown by numerous indicators for education (women make up over two-thirds of the global illiterate population), health or economic activity.

AICESIS has adopted guidelines for a gender equality strategy.

They primarily concern sectoral policies in areas where inequality is at its most serious: access to education, health,

employment and economic activity, migration, fighting violence against women, and more generally, women's place in society.

However, over and above these sectoral policies, we need a cross-sectoral approach because we have to improve the integration of gender equality issues in all aspects of development policies.

Civil society organisations have a considerable role to play in achieving this.

The manner in which these Organisations will be involved in the implementation and monitoring of these actions in each country will have to be decided.

Economic and social Councils, by their very nature and membership, would thus be able to put themselves forward as ideal forums for fostering innovation, and as monitoring bodies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Thank you for your attention.