GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN: OHCHR POLICY STATEMENT

The Human Rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION (PART I, PARA 18)

Overview

The core mandate of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is to contribute to the realization of all human rights for all people without distinction of any kind, including race, colour, language, religion, sexual preference, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or other status. Accordingly, non-discrimination on the basis of sex is a fundamental principle of international human rights law first recognized by the United Nations in its Charter (1945) and subsequently in the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Recent world conferences, including Vienna (1993), Cairo (1994) and Beijing (1995) have confirmed the strong link between the gendered nature of violations of human rights, and the actual advancement of women’s rights. Discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity. It is also an obstacle to the participation of women on equal terms with men in all spheres of society.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights endorses the United Nations policy on gender mainstreaming, by making gender mainstreaming an organizational imperative. In so doing, the Office reinforces the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex as a means of ensuring gender equality in the enjoyment of human rights.

Gender mainstreaming at OHCHR

The approach of the OHCHR to mainstreaming gender in its policies, programmes and operational procedures is as follows:

- Gender concerns will be reflected in the conceptualization, implementation and evaluation of human rights policies, strategic planning and the setting of priorities and objectives.

- The impact of activities, protocols and procedures aimed at advancing human rights will be examined on the basis of gender.

- Having a special responsibility to make the link between gender and human rights, OHCHR will undertake training and sensitization programmes aimed at integrating gender and building capacity for gender analysis from a human rights perspective for staff, human rights bodies and consultants.

- OHCHR will actively support the development and implementation of specific programmes, projects and activities aimed at improving the enjoyment by women and girl-children of their fundamental human rights. As far as possible this work will be undertaken in consultation and collaboration with other UN agencies and programmes.

- OHCHR is giving specific priority to the issue of trafficking in persons. OHCHR’s work in this area is based on the principle that human rights must be at the core of any anti-trafficking strategy. The key objective of OHCHR is to integrate human rights into international, regional and national anti-trafficking initiatives - particularly at the legal and policy levels. As far as possible, OHCHR seeks to act as a catalyst and support for the work of others.

- Specific strategies and benchmarks to measure progress will be developed and implemented to oversee the integration of a gender approach to the advancement of human rights for all.
• OHCHR encourages Member States to ensure the active and broad participation of women in all fields of United Nations human rights activities. They include treaty bodies, Special Mechanisms, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

• As the lead United Nations organization for the follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, OHCHR is fully committed to maintaining a policy dialogue on human rights and gender mainstreaming with its UN partners (particularly UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNIFEM, UNFPA and the Division for the Advancement of Women), as well as with governments, development banks, bilateral aid agencies, NGOs and civil society. The objective is to build common understanding of the fundamental link between gender issues and the human rights of women and girl-children.

• In operationalizing its commitment, OHCHR recognizes the primary responsibility of Senior Management to provide active leadership in the gender mainstreaming process. OHCHR is committed to achieving internal gender parity - particularly in management positions and field posts. Specific budgetary and staff allocations will be made to ensure a steady increase in the gender mainstreaming process until gender is routinely taken into account in all placements and disbursements.

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