

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS (I.A.E.S.C.S.L)

Oral statement on behalf of the I.A.E.S.C.S.I. of the Vice President of the National Council for Economy and Labour of Italy (CNEL), Mrs. Francesca Santoro, to the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

New York, United Nations, 7th March 2005

Madame Chair,

I am the Vice President of the Italian National Economic and Labour Council and am speaking to you on behalf of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutes, the IAESCSI.

IAESCSI's main goal is to affirm the values and practice of social cohesion to reconcile economic development with its environmental sustainability and with social equity. Since the Economic and Social Councils of the individual countries include representatives of the entrepreneurial, trade-union and organised civil society forces as well as experts appointed by the institutions) they can help, either with direct participation at the national level or through IAESCSI, to stress the viewpoint of an important part of the "civil society" in affirming gender equality in national and international institutions.

In many parts of the world, social cohesion is severely hindered in particular by armed conflicts, the use of violence to regulate human relations and an increase in territorial imbalances and poverty.

Women are doubly affected because in many fields their rights are not recognised and because they have to carry the burden of child bearing - often without suitable safety nets - and are to a large extent dependent on men.

Even in many of the more developed countries, not directly involved in wars and with a greater participation of women in the labour market, social cohesion is put in doubt because of a tendency to consider it as a hindrance to the demands of competition in the global market.

We're facing the risk of affirming a model of unregulated competition which, aiming solely at lowering costs and ignoring innovation, the quality of products and human resources, penalizes above all women.

In this era of globalization, it is in the best interests of women, of all women, to assert a "high quality" and "healthy" concept of competition and economic and social models based on the greatest and most real social cohesion.

We are also convinced that a more stable international balance cannot but put this approach into practice, both within single countries and within different regions of the world.

Because of their nature and composition, the Economic and Social Councils could become ideal "incubators" for innovative experiences and monitoring forums to combat and overcome gender inequalities. In particular, to promote the global goals of equality between men and women, of development and peace, IAESCSI considers that it is fundamental:

- for the more developed countries to make concrete efforts to allocate at least 0.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to aid to development, thereby stepping up the fight to eradicate poverty;
- for the empowerment of women to be achieved in the north and south of the world, respecting the core labour standards as spelt out in the ILO fundamental Declaration (starting from the decent work);
- for the WTO talks to include the gender perspective in its revision mechanisms if free trade is to be an opportunity for women;
- to achieve the universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and of the Optional Protocol;
- to implement the goals of the Millennium Declaration and in particular the following points: a) the strong and constant commitment, of public powers on all levels with regards to teaching and education, to guidance to training and fully tapping the experience and hence the possibility, especially for women, of making choices and having opportunities; b) the improvement of maternal health.

In conclusion — Madam Chair — this is a brief summary of an extensive document with which IAESCSI and the National Councils pledge to do their utmost to achieve the core objectives of this conference.

Thank you!