



***International Association of the Economic and Social Councils and Similar
Institutions
(AICESIS)***

54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women:

New York, 8th March 2010

Statement by the International Association of the Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) delivered by Mrs. Anna Corossacz, Adviser to the National Council for Economics and Labor of Italy (CNEL).

I speak on behalf of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, AICESIS, association created in Mauritius 10 years ago by 27 countries and which includes today more than 56 institutions from African, Latin American, Asiatic and European countries, plus 8 new membership applications.

The principal goals of AICESIS are to promote dialogue and exchange experiences and best practices between members, promote the establishment of ESC in the world, reinforce the practice of social cohesion through social dialogue and participative governance in order to reconcile economic development with environmental sustainability and social equity.

The members of AICESIS are autonomous consultative assemblies with national competence, composed by organizations representing “social partners” (employers, trade unions) and other organizations of the civil society (farmers, artisans, NGOs, etc), thus having an authentic representation of economic and social interests. They can contribute through their direct participation at the national level, or through AICESIS, to give the view of an important component of the “civil society” for gender equality towards national and international institutions.

1. The 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women offers an important opportunity to analyze the progress and the remaining challenges for the achievement of the Beijing's Declaration and the Platform for Action 15 years after its adoption in 1995.

2. This anniversary comes in a time of great economic, social and financial difficulties for millions of women and men in the North and in the South of the world.
3. Analyze the crisis impact on women and men becomes an essential task in order that the usual way of acting do not prevail once again inside the globalized system, which is also accompanied by an increase of inequalities among and within countries. From this view the crisis offers us an opportunity to look for a new political/economic and social paradigm based on rights, gender equality and equity.
4. The achievements of last decades, concerning gender equality in particular, depend on the way to manage them. This means that not only the 12 points of the Platform for Action are in danger, but also that it will be extremely difficult to realize the MDGs for 2015, objectives already threatened by the energy and food crises of spring 2008.
5. During this long period, in all countries, employment will be the most effected field. It is one of the main points on the agenda of the AICESIS member Councils. We would like to concentrate us on this point: if globalization has increased women's presence in the labor world, the crisis effects will be different on women because gender differences (participation, unemployment rate, wages) are a persistent aspect of global labor markets, despite the development of women education. There are several reasons: stereotypes, sharing family responsibility, horizontal and vertical separations, etc.
6. Greater integration in the labor market made women a key figure who contributes to the family income, who depends more and more on two salaries. In addition, everywhere in the world women frequently becomes the head of the family, which entirely depends on their work.
7. Unlike previous crises, the men unemployment rate does not increase faster than women rate, but it is equal, the global recession affecting all sectors: agriculture and industry – based more often on the men workforce – and services, where the female workforce is important.
8. Immigrants, among whom there are many women, are also affected. Restrictive measures exist in many developed countries to limit the work of immigrants, who are often forced to accept unstable and underpaid jobs. The situation gets worse for women immigrants, more vulnerable and exposed to labor and sexual exploitation and various abuses.
9. Experience has taught us that, once the economic recovery starts, it needs 3 to 5 years to reach the employment levels existing before the

crisis. This consideration and the importance of the last crisis have led governments to implement *ad hoc* measures to face the economic crisis in order that it does not transform into social crisis. However these measures tend to be gender blind. Budget cuts may lead to expenses reduction including public services (education, health) where women are the main workforce. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that this phase is carefully checked and that the difference of the gender dimension is studied.

10. It could be the right time to reassess GDP as the only growth indicator and consider the idea of using different indicators taking into account gender differences and the labor done by women as a source of wealth for everybody (women access to the labor market, wages differences, women's access to all jobs, family responsibility distribution). The introduction of gender statistics becomes a *sine qua non* condition.
11. The crisis urges world economies to explore new sectors in order to promote a sustainable economic growth. Among these sectors, the green economy and the knowledge economy are the most suitable ones to promote growth implementing a greater distributive justice, respectful of gender and consequently of the decent work characteristics. These approaches ensure a more equal distribution of paid professional jobs between men and women.
12. To face the current global crisis and to achieve the MDGs and the Beijing's Platform for Action, an effort, at the global, national and sub-national level must be done for a greater involvement of the whole civil society in the decision making processes. Therefore it is necessary to implement new forms of participative governance, allowing governments to face the increasing complexity and interdependency of a series of economic, social and environmental issues, pointed out by the current crisis.
13. The social dialogue reinforcement requires the regular participation of citizens through ESCs which provide the essential legal and institutional framework and enable parties to be involved to promote a participatory democracy working to get a greater social cohesion.
14. Among the Beijing's Platform for Action recommendations, all parties have promised to ensure equal access and full participation of women in the decision making structures through legislation, the creation of *ad hoc* working groups and the implementation of equality observers. Unfortunately the participation of women in ESCs is still low. This situation reflects more generally the limited presence of women at

executive positions in the socio-professional organizations, in the institutions and in the economic bodies.

This situation reflects the general difficulties met by women to assert themselves in their professional life. Among the many reasons, we would like to remind family responsibilities and many social and cultural stereotypes that around the world significantly inhibit women from achieving full gender equality. The current crisis could worsen this situation. For this, our efforts for economic recovery should aim at finding policies focused on the role of women in the society in order to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

For its part, AICESIS began to think on the situation of women in the world since 2004, with the participation of AICESIS in the works of the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and again in 2005 with a report on "Status of Women". In 2010, one of the working topics chosen by AICESIS is "the empowerment of women". Our President will also intervene in July 2010 at the next plenary session of ECOSOC to issue, like every year now, the AICESIS members views.

Also since 2007, AICESIS has implemented the MDGs Awards which reward ESCs, NGOs or institutions of higher learning for their efforts to achieve the MDGs. Thus in 2007, the Brazilian President, Mr. Lula da Silva, gave an Award to the ESC of Ivory Coast to support the Association "Repères", which is affiliated with the NGO "The mothers World movement".

This year, an Award will be given during our General Assembly in New York on July 6 and 7, to an academic institution for its efforts in favor of the empowerment of women.