



HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 39th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
Apostolic Nuncio
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Economic and Social Council
52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**On Item 3 (a) (i):
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”:
Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the
critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:
Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women**

New York, 3 March 2008

Mr. Chairman,

As we approach the Doha Review Conference on financing for development, this year's priority theme provides us with an opportunity to discuss and assess the impact of financing programs on women. The Monterrey Consensus rightfully calls on countries and all stakeholders to make sound economic decisions and ensure that economic growth and poverty eradication benefit all men, women and children.

The last decade has seen greater involvement of women in all aspects of decision making, especially in economic development. Indeed, the empowerment of women requires their participation in the decision-making process to ensure that their specific insights are heard and taken into account, their concerns adequately addressed and that these concerns are reflected in the decisions taken and in the programs adopted. Through this participation, the individual and collective strengths and talents of women are effectively employed.

As the Millennium Development Goal number 3 rightly acknowledges, equal access to education at all levels lies at the heart of the efforts to empower women. In its work of promoting education for all and at every level, the Holy See remains fully committed to investing in the education of women and girls. In many parts of the world, Catholic institutions of learning continue to have enrollments which are predominantly female and work to empower women within society.

However, empowering women through education cannot work in isolation. Disenfranchisement of women and discriminatory practices must be addressed and eliminated. Women must be guaranteed equality of opportunity, equal pay for equal work, fairness in career advancement, equal access to healthcare and legal structures and equality in property and family rights. Programs, many of which are faith-based, providing assistance to needy women, in particular to victims of sexual and physical abuse, must remain a priority.

Policies and initiatives which foster women's ability to participate fully in the workplace have resulted in an ever increasing presence of women in the formal work sector. However, this reality has created new challenges for women, such as exploitation in sweatshops and trafficking of women and girls for economic and sexual purposes. Thus, the increasing number of women working outside the home challenges governments to enact laws, implement programs and enforce measures to protect women from unscrupulous predators, subhuman working conditions and dehumanizing work.

The tremendous contribution of women to society within households and families as wives and mothers often goes unrecognized and unrewarded. Women face the challenge of simultaneously raising children and trying to achieve economic security. There is need for greater resources and more courageous policies to reward the socio-economic contribution of women within the home. Rewarding it in some way particularly helps poor women and those who are less able to enter the labor market. It would also be a concrete way to enable women to benefit from public expenditure from which oftentimes and in many places they do not get their fair share or are even excluded. Obviously, men must assume their responsibility within the home and family.

Finally, Governments, civil society and faith-based organizations would do well to work together to find creative ways of promoting full access of women to development programs and financing schemes. Initiatives such as microfinance programs for women demonstrate that human ingenuity has the ability to create new and innovative solutions in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

This is not merely a struggle to advance equality and empowerment of women. Even more fundamentally, this is an integral part of the overall effort to ensure that the equality and dignity of all human persons is fully respected.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.