



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY (EWL) ORAL STATEMENT TO THE 53rd SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 2-13
March 2009

**Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including
care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS**

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) representing 2000 women's organisations in Europe affirms that caring for others and being cared for at different stages of our lives is one of the commonly shared experiences of our humanity. Placing care therefore on the political agenda is a **matter of urgency** in which gender equality must be at the heart of a holistic approach to care.

Women in the European Union, represented in the European Women's Lobby will not accept that the current financial world crisis is used in any way whatsoever on the part of any policy-maker at any level of governance, to turn their back on care on the pretext that the current economic environment is not conducive of such investments. On the contrary, we believe that this is the moment to establish a care policy that has as its premises equality between women and men. The time has come to revisit and reshuffle the entrenched traditional gender division of roles, norms and practices that have led to the persistent undervaluing of care because it is carried out primarily by women hence mirroring the status of women all over the world.

Care is not a women's issue but a concern for society as a whole; the AIDS pandemic is a bleak reminder of this fact. Men's equal share of care giving and responsibilities must be addressed as women and men cross the social constructed boundaries of the public and private spheres in all areas of life.

The EWL calls for a clear strategic political framework which includes targets and resources for a holistic approach to care; one that removes the disproportionate burden from women to ensure equality between women and men, solidarity between and among generations and the strengthening of democracy.

At the level of the **United Nations**, we seek a political commitment at the highest level to affirm that the right to care and to care giving is a fundamental human right. We expect that the institutional reform process and in particular the Gender Equality Architectural Reform (GEAR) will strengthen the resources throughout the United Nations to ensure that a

meaningful gender equality framework is driven from the top and brings about transformation on the ground.

At the level of the **European Union**, we seek a reconfirmation of the **Barcelona Targets on Child Care**, agreed by the Heads of States at the Spring Summit of 2002. We call furthermore for a scrutiny of the barriers that are preventing these commitments from being met in all countries by 2010 and in particular issues relating to **accessibility, affordability and quality** as well as **valuing** the sector that is gender segregated and predominately female. We also seek an **extension of targets** to the care provision of other dependents - women and men, girls and boys - in particular, the elderly and those with special needs, including women and men faced with HIV/AIDS.

At **country/State level**, we seek clear budgetary provisions as part of **gender budgeted national financial/economic recovery plans** to ensure long term investments in care.

In addition we underline the need to invest further **research and resources** into **empowering** women to protect themselves from **sexually transmitted diseases**, including **HIV**, to enable them to take control over their own bodies when faced with situations where men use violence to exert power over women.

Finally, we call for a change in the way in which girls and boys are socially constructed to become adult women and men. Challenging **gender stereotypes** in relation to care particularly at the early stages of life is crucial in understanding that gender stereotypes **constrain the opportunities and choices** of both girls and boys.