

**COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
48TH SESSION- KENYA**

17 JANUARY 2011

Speaker: Sr Patricia Ndunge

Mr President,

Thank you very much for convening this meeting. We are very pleased to share some concerns about Kenya.

Franciscan International has been working for long years in Kenya. Last summer, FI carried on a mission, meeting grass roots partners in order to prepare this CEDAW report, as well as conducted national consultations.

We are coming from Kenya to share concrete and direct testimonies about our main concerns.

Mr President,

We are concerned about the socio-economic context and the violence against women. Discrimination remains strongly present due to the persistence of certain cultural norms and practises. Discrimination is widely spread in the field of employment sector, education, property rights, that lead women to remain extremely dependent on men. Patriarchal system, as well as stereotypes, regarding the roles of women prevent them from the enjoyment of a wide range of rights and opportunities for the self development of women.

The institutionalisation of customary law in some aspects, as well as a number of legal provisions, compromise women's enjoyment of their human rights. Gender based violence remains a serious and persistent issue in Kenya. Most of the cases remain unreported or at least unpunished. The UNICEF representative in Kenya emphasised that "we need to get people talking to break the silence around violence and make sure that everyone knows where to go to get help".

Mr President,

We would like to draw your attention on specific points and address the following issues:

- The education of the girls and the gender balance. There is affirmative action programmes in education such as free primary education. However, girls are slightly underrepresented at school. Early pregnancy, poverty, denied access to Health services lead to poor school attendance or drop out.
- Gender mainstreaming is not a priority for the government; therefore, women in all social, economic and political spheres of Kenya are underrepresented. In real sense, there is poor representation in higher decision making levels of women.

- Women continue to lag behind in the employment sectors. Many employers in the private sector do not comply with the provisions of the New Employment Act as regards maternity leave.
- Healthcare remains a serious concern. There are few referral hospitals and experts for maternal issues. Maternal mortality rate is still too high under untrained traditional birth attendants. Promotion of hormonal contraceptives has had adverse known effects on women. Lack of proper nutrition is a serious problem with regard to HIV/AIDS treatment on women.
- Trafficking of girls and women within or outside Kenya is still a serious issue. Child prostitution is not adequately addressed and recognized in our country.
- The family as institution is facing challenges such as effects of separation due to work station.

Mr President,

We urge the government of Kenya to take serious steps to address these issues and we would recommend you to address the following issues:

- The government should undertake national campaigns aimed at raising awareness on right to education, including measures that encourage parents to ensure their children go to school. Additionally, the government should provide sufficient numbers of qualified teachers for public schools.
- The government should take the necessary steps to raise awareness on the content of the training manual on gender mainstreaming.
- The government should ensure that gender mainstreaming be encouraged as a real practise in public, private and self employment sector.
- The government should revise the recruitment and remuneration policy of low-income women workers engaged in the agricultural sector and domestic work.
- The government should take concrete steps to implement the Trafficking in persons Act. Including measures to help eradicate the root causes of the phenomenon of child prostitution as well as women' prostitution.
- We urge the government to increase the number and distribution of referral hospitals, as well as competent medical personnel and train traditional birth attendants. Promotion of natural family planning needs to be emphasised.
- The government should put in place family friendly policies.

Mr President,

To conclude, please, let me reiterate that, harmful traditional practices, lack of education, poverty are serious hindrances to the promotion of women's rights. We urge the government to take in serious consideration these root causes and to take a firm position and concrete measures to fight against gender based discriminations and violence in our country.

Thank you, Mr President