

**CSW 57, Elimination and prevention of
all forms of violence against women and girls.**

March 2013.

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Over 6,000 women attended from all over the world and 131 States. These women belonged to either their countries' delegations (some countries sent as many as 15 women) or NGOs. Most meetings and parallel events were held in the North Lawn building or the Church Center, the latter being less formal, facilitating the less official but free flow of ideas.

Notably, this year 3 out of 4 women from Iran were able to obtain passports and allowed to attend the CSW; also Palestine participated for the first time since their new UN status and was very vocal.

For 2 weeks, we heard of all the forms of violence perpetuated on this planet against women simply because they are women. What a complex and sad state of affairs!

Rape as a weapon: My heart wept for the women of Mali and the Congo, both countries in the throes of wars where **rape** is used as a method of war; in Mali the perpetrators were referred to as Narco- Jihadists using religion as a tool to discourage and control the populations in the North; 70% of rapes are gang rapes; little girls and older women are not spared. In Papua New Guinea, expanding polygamy and rape are also used as a method of dissuasion; those Islands are in the midst of out of control capitalism fueled by arms trade and Big Mining.

Trafficking for the purpose of sex slavery: In Australia, over 2000 women, largely from Asia, are trafficked for the sex industry every year; many thousands more in the Netherlands, Germany and the US. The women come from Laos, Thailand, and the African continent and are lured by advertisements of high paying jobs and immigration visas abroad. These women are Human rights victims.

On this subject, much care must be taken when law enforcement officials arrest these women; the women must not be given criminal records, making it impossible for them to be rehabilitated either in their country of immigration or at home.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) (And its many health consequences): practiced in various forms in 28 States, illegal in many, such as Mali but this law is not

enforced as it is trumped by “customary law”. This degrading practice was much decried both publically in the UN building and privately in the Church Center.

Elimination of the Girl child: This takes many forms: in India and China, a girl child is unwanted (either by her mother or the government) and killed either before she is born (using sex selection technologies) in the wealthier strata or at birth in the poorer populations as the movie: “It’s a girl” documents well. Those countries have now achieved the destabilizing demographics of 140 boys for 100 girls.

Early and forced marriages: Movie “Too young to wed”. In many countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, girls as young as 8 are sold in marriage to older men or as blood money.

There are many more forms of violence against women and girls, amongst them: involuntary and coerced sterilization of girls with disabilities, elder abuse, rampant rape in refugee camps; a very particular angst from displaced Japanese women victims of the Tsunami and the radioactive fallout (Japanese government is very slow in rehabilitating); Domestic violence in the US costs 5 Billion a year...

A lot of time and many workshops were spent describing the methodology used to record these violent acts. WHO has a 3 week training course for statisticians in the field....Women are silent about their sufferings, too scared to talk in patriarchal societies.

It seemed to me that the 131 countries making statements for their delegations (which took one and one- half weeks) all used the agreed UN language: Adherent to CEDAW, and Beijing platform of action. Most countries have beautiful brochures detailing all the services available to women and emphasizing their equality of the sexes and non-discrimination on account of gender, and their success in implementing the UN’s MDG’s (Millennium Development Goals) etc. Countries most at fault like Turkey, the Congo and Iran have the glossiest brochures.

Michelle Bachelet was seen every day, making statements about eliminating all this pain (Malian women were very touched that she visited their country) and asking for more financial support to implement international laws. This year, a great emphasis was put on enrolling faith based NGOs to help in the task such as World Vision.

Bright spots: The Statement from the Holy See was sobering, reminding all of the “authentic dignity and worth of all women and girls, especially the poorest of the poor, the illiterate, the abandoned, the aged, the migrants and refugees... it is widely recognized that the more the dignity of the women is promoted and protected, the more the family, the community and the society as a whole will flourish”; all governments need to set a high priority to do their job towards that goal. A woman’s body is not a consumer good, merchandise, a commodity. Violence can never be justified. Mrs. Cosimo Iuv reminded all with very specific examples that the Catholic Church all over the world has always worked, before the existence of the United Nations, in the field to reinstate and alleviate the plight of women

Many side events were hosted by groups such as Watch International, Saving Face, Restored, the Tear Fund and Good Will women (from Brazil) that demonstrated their aim to heal and help women in situations of violence.

In conclusion, the statement of Dominique Jacquemin-Mangé for WUCWO:” In the face of violence, solidarity between people is the only rampart that will assure each woman, each girl that her physical, moral and psychological integrity has inalienable value ultimately connected to her dignity” are extremely clairvoyant as we all had a recent example with the rape case in India or Mallalla from Afghanistan. The CSWs are an important time to listen and empathize with our sisters in pain and network. Although participants, we do not have access to the deliberations that lead to the Agreed Conclusions, we must find a concrete way to communicate with the Holy See mission that as an NGO representing 6.000 000 women around the world, we stand with them.