



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

54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Statement by the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS), delivered by Mrs. Anna Corossaci, Advisor to the National Council for Economic and Labour Affairs (CNEL), Italy.

I speak on behalf of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, AICESIS, association created in 1999, 10 years ago, by 27 countries and which includes today more than 100 institutions from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Oceania and the Pacific.

The principal goals of AICESIS are to promote dialogue and exchange experiences and best practices between members, contribute to the establishment of ESC in the world, reinforce the practice of social cohesion through social dialogue and participatory 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, workers, trade unions and 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 evaluate 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 at a time of great economic, social and financial crisis 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 a good opportunity to look for a new optimal 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 affected area. It is one of the main points on the agenda of the AICFOS member Councils. We would like to concentrate us on this point: if organizations are successful in their presence in the labor world, the effects should not be different on women because gender differences (paid/unpaid care work, wages) are a persistent aspect of global labor markets, despite the development of women education. There are several reasons: stereotypes, changing family responsibility, horizontal and vertical separations, etc.

6. Career integration in the labor market made women a key figure who contributed to the family income who depends more and more on two salaries. In addition, progressively in the world women frequently becomes the head of the family, which entirely depends on their work.

7. However, in this crisis, 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 taken in many developed countries to limit the work of immigrants, who are often forced to accept unstable and underpaid jobs, are affecting women immigrants, more vulnerable and exposed to labor and sexual exploitation and various abuses.

9. Experience may teach us that once the economic recovery starts, it needs 6 years to reach the employment levels existing before the

crisis. This consideration and the importance of the least as rich states have led governments to implement a number of measures to forestall a economic crisis in order that it does not transform into a social crisis. However, these measures tend to be gender-blind. The budget cuts have led to a reduction in public services such as health care, where women are the main workforce. Therefore, it is important that this phase is carefully checked and that the difference between gender dimension is considered.

10. It could be the right time to reassess GDP as a growth indicator and consider 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, work-life balance, family responsibility distribution). The introduction of gender equality standards is a 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 and employment. It is important to respect the respectfulness and consequence of the decent work characteristics. This is a mere equality in the 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. It is necessary to implement new forms of participative governance. Governments must focus the increasing economic activity on a series of economic, social and environmental issues, limited only by the current crisis.
13. The social dialogue reinforcement requires the regular participation of citizens through ESCs, ESCs which provide a social dialogue framework and enable parties to be involved to promote a participatory democracy working to reach greater social cohesion.
14. Among the Beijing's Platform for Action recommendations, companies have promised to ensure equal access and full participation of women in the decision making of their organizations. This is done through ad hoc working groups and the implementation of equality observers. Unfortunately the participation of women in ESCs is low. This situation reflects more generally, the limited presence of women

Executive positions in the social professional organizations, in the institutions and in the economic bodies.

This situation reflects the general difficulties met by women to assert themselves both professionally and among the many reasons, we would like to mention family responsibilities and many social and cultural stereotypes that hinder the world significantly inhibit women from achieving full gender equality. The current crisis is a worst case 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.

AICESIS began to think on the situation of its women in the world since 2004 with the participation of AICESIS in the works of the 48th session of the Status of Women, and again in 2005 with a report on the "Empowerment of women". Our President will also intervene in July 2010 at the extraordinary session of the UN Women's issue, the "every year now", the AICESIS members views.

Also since 2007, AICESIS has been honored with the MDC Awards which reward ESCOs for their contribution to high performance for their efforts to achieve the MDGs. Thus in 2007, the Brazilian President, Mr. Lula da Silva, gave an award to ESCOs who worked to support the Association "Repères", which is affiliated with the NGO "The mothers World Movement".

This year, AICESIS is being honored by the United Nations Assembly in New York City, NY, on April 7, 2010 an academic institution for its efforts in favor of the empowerment of women.