



ITALY

54th SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MARA CARFAGNA
MINISTER OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

(New York, Tuesday, 2 March 2010)



MARYLAND

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
20th SESSION OF THE

STATEMENT BY

REBECCA CARROLL
DIRECTOR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

(New York, Tuesday, 1 March 2010)

Mr. Chair,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to extend my education and attachment made by Spain for benefit of the European Union.

The 54th session of the CSW marks an important step for women throughout the world: the 15th anniversary for the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, whose Declaration and Platform of Action are referred to the world the strategic goals and actions that should be undertaken to overcome obstacles to the promotion of women's rights. The Conference was unquestionably a crucial turning point in the recognition of the role of women in the political, social and cultural development of each society and of the planet as a whole. For Italy, Beijing also marked an extremely important institutional step: in fact, in the years that followed, our Country used the Beijing Platform and the principles of mainstreaming, gender equality, and women's empowerment as the basis for its own policies and, for the first time, it has appointed a Minister for Equal Opportunities in charge of overseeing the implementation and coordination of such policies and ensuring the proper enactment and monitoring of laws and governmental orientations.

Since we are now celebrating the adoption of the Declaration, we wish to forcefully reaffirm our desire to promote our prime objectives: equality, development, and peace for all women everywhere and for all humanity.

The anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and the Beijing Platform has also become an important moment of reflection as we look to the future of gender politics. This year should include recovery from an economic crisis that has had a very harsh effect on women.

As the Benelux Treaty states, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes that everyone has the right to participate in the management of his or her country's public affairs.

Thus, the active participation of women in the decision-making processes and in the labor market that is to be achieved today, the increase in their power and autonomy of women and the improvement of their social, economic, and political conditions are fundamental for the existence of transparent, accountable governments and public administrations, and essential for lasting development in every field of life.

We know that 60% of the world's poor are women and that one of the main causes of poverty is unemployment.

It is fundamental that we increase the presence of women in the formative training by improving their skills and promoting excellence, while addressing the issue of gender segregation. Another great obstacle to the entrance of women into the workforce is the lack of social infrastructures that can reconcile work and family life.

In this context, last December the Italian Government drafted a Plan for the inclusiveness of women in the workplace, which sees the joint collaboration of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Labor. The Plan contains new measures aimed at increasing female employment, such as tax benefits and new projects and programs co-financed by the European Union's structural funds.

In particular, a plan for a series of proportionate initiatives was created, funded and approved by the Equal Opportunities Ministry, for a total of 40 million euros. The Plan provides for the reinforcement of incentives for training and employment, as well as the financing of domestic day care day care for working mothers. Part of the resources will fund measures aimed at supporting reconciliation policies for freelancers and independent workers.

All these initiatives belong to a larger, larger, detour line of a line that stretches back to the years of the Beijing Platform aimed at ensuring a more effective application of gender mainstreaming in every field, from public administration to development cooperation activities. Enhancing gender issues in development cooperation activities has been one of the interesting grounds for ministerial meetings in Italy since the years of the Beijing Platform. Following actions to benefit women in the field of sports, mainly in the southern hemisphere, and in the European Union, the Italian cooperation system has been particularly attentive to gender policies, and has thus been able to constantly build on its experience, thanks to the support of decentralized organizations, laboratories of public and private sector, and NGOs.

We must not forget how important it is to safeguard women against sexual harassment and violence. Violence against women and children is not only a violation of their human rights, it is also an impediment to their economic and social fulfillment, since a woman who has been subjected to sexual violence or abuse will face greater difficulties, especially of a psychological nature, when entering the work force, starting up a career, and enhancing her talents.

This is why during his G8 Presidency, Italy hosted a conference denouncing all forms of violence against women. The conclusions of this initiative, which for the first time brought the issue of violence against women to the attention of the G8, are summarized in the appeal from the Prime Ministers and personalities that attended calling for a new era of international cooperation between governments to address the common challenge of eradicating every form of violence against women. This process will not be quick or easy, but it is important that the fight against every form of gender and sexual violence be recognized as a prerequisite for the development of the planet.

Allow me also to briefly recall Italy's long commitment in the fight against female genital mutilation: as testimony to this commitment, on March the 3rd, on the margins of

the session of the CSW, I will be hosting together with my colleagues from Egypt and Senegal an event dedicated to ending the practice of female genital mutilation, an initiative upon which I hope can contribute to ensure progress towards our common goal.

Dear Friends,

The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have identified a number of critical issues, which are more or less common to all countries, but also the same will to create a gender equality policy at both the national and international levels.

It is my conviction that the best way to achieve gender equality is through the creation of a new gender equality framework, which will be the basis for the development of the Composite Index of Gender Equality (CI-GE). This index will be a key indicator of the progress of the advancement of women and gender equality. We are therefore hopeful that it will be created as quickly as possible and we encourage the Secretary General to accelerate the process of adoption of the CI-GE under Secretary General's supervision.

In conclusion, the evidence is clear: it is not bad economics if both men and women are engaged in economic activity and in the productive system of every nation. This is why I allow myself to remind all of us present that when the winds of crisis blow strong, some will seek shelter while others must have the courage to build windmills to mill the flour for next generations.

Thank you for your attention.