

Fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women  
9-20 March 2015

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Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC.

Zonta International presents to the participants of the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women the following statement for the consideration of the Commission in its deliberations on the 20-year review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Founded in 1919, Zonta International works to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. Zonta has had an active role at all four of the women's conferences, beginning with its Past International President Helvi Sipilä, who served as the Secretary General for the First World Conference held in Mexico City in 1975. Sipilä went on to spearhead the establishment of Unifem and InStraw, now part of UN Women, and was a driving force behind Zonta's work with the United Nations.

Since 1923, Zonta has funded projects in 36 countries, empowering women and contributing to a life free of violence for women with more than US\$19 million. Most of this funding has been through UN agencies. In addition, Zonta's representation in 67 countries has guaranteed millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours to implementing the commitments made in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and also in Beijing. Today, Zonta continues to be on the front lines for women's rights through local and global projects that promote self-sufficiency, equal rights, access to education and health, and the prevention of violence against women.

As evaluation of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is being undertaken, Zonta International calls on parents, educators, administrators, law and policy makers and delegates to the 59th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women to address PREVENTION OF ROOT CAUSES THROUGH EDUCATION and to facilitate effective mechanisms that will ensure

#### 1. EQUALITY by

- Increasing the level of non-discriminatory education

Laws and policies shall enable equal access to education for girls and boys and shall ensure that girls can continue their education regardless of marital or parental status.

Such education requires the adoption of a human rights-based approach through and in education, ensuring the learning of human rights, that the human rights of all members of the school community are respected and human rights are practiced within the education system.

- Guaranteeing women access to all resources and representation in decision making positions on the same basis as men.

Alignment between the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Agenda, and intergovernmental resolutions is needed to guarantee women access to all resources and to ensure greater representation and participation of women in national and local decision-making bodies and other areas of civic engagement.

## 2. ERADICATION of VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN by

- Supporting PREVENTIVE programs promoting gender-equal norms and violence-free environments, and programs that help men to change behavior towards women to one of mutual respect.
- PROTECTION of women by providing One Stop Centers with medical/legal/social help for victims. Furthermore, promoting short term shelters and long term affordable housing for women and children, and supporting vocational training for victims to become self-supporting.
- PROSECUTION of the perpetrators through a) laws that clearly blame perpetrators, not victims; b) reporting systems and support to victims during legal processes; c) training of police and legal professionals to understand the issues.

Equal rights and a life free of violence is NOT a women's issue. It is a societal issue that has to be solved by women and men working together to reach common goals. As a non-governmental organization, Zonta International encourages the UN Commission on the Status of Women, ECOSOC and the General Assembly to adopt a strong, sustainable Post-2015 development framework, and calls upon governments to shape the International Development Cooperation for its effective implementation.