

**Address by Ambassador Grinius
2010 International Women's Day
March 8th, 10:00 to 12:00
Palais des Nations, Room XXIII**

**NGO Committee on the Status of Women event
Panel on: "2010: Watershed for Women's Human Rights and
Empowerment"**

- I am happy to join you, and to be in such distinguished company. This is an important subject. I will aim to give you Canada's perspectives on achievements so far, the challenges that remain and a few thoughts on how to move forward.

Achievements

- On achievements (*NB: HC may have covered this ground already so you may need to adjust accordingly*): Women's human rights are now firmly on the agenda and embedded in international human rights law and norms.
- What does that mean?
 - There is broad and growing recognition that the protection and promotion of women's human rights, in addition to its intrinsic value, is critical to societal well-being, notably in terms of the safety, security, development, prosperity, education, nutrition and health of girls and women.
 - A fairly comprehensive set of multilateral tools are now deployed to advance the cause of women's rights, including:
- **Legal Instruments and Treaty Bodies:** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), central to the promotion and protection of women's rights, has reached near-universal ratification.

- The **Security Council** also played a vital role through UNSC Resolution 1325. Resolution 1325 was the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate impact of war on women, and women's contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.
- 1325 was just the beginning. It has been followed by Security Council resolutions to deal specifically with sexual violence and other forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls in situations of conflict.¹
- The **Human Rights Council**, and through it the UN General Assembly, advances the women's agenda through its Special Procedures, Universal Period Review, resolutions, and panels that set priorities on a range of relevant issues.
- The resolution led introduced by Chile at the 6th session of the Council (Resolution 6/30²), in particular, was a key initiative to promote the integration of the human rights of women throughout the UN system.
- The **Commission on the Status of Women**, the **MDGs** on maternal and child health, and the new gender entity are other important avenues for the advancement of women and women's rights.

Current Efforts

- I will briefly highlight to two areas where Canada is taking a lead role in advancing the women's rights agenda.
- First, we lead the annual HRC resolution on violence against women. This resolution has its origins in the Commission on Human Rights, where Canada introduced it in 1994 to establish the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Eliminating All Forms of Violence Against Women.

¹ UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889

² Resolution title: Integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system

- We'll be running the resolution on violence against women at the June session and I hope that our discussion today will be a source of ideas and inspiration for this year's effort.
- In fact, as president of the G8 in 2010, Canada will champion a major G8 initiative to improve the health of women and children in *developing countries*. *We are calling on G8 and other partners to join us in applying our collective political and financial capital to help developing countries reduce maternal mortality and under-five child mortality.*
- In our discussion, it would be valuable for me to hear your views on which multilateral and institutional processes you think are delivering and which are not; and how and where efforts could be improved or made more coordinated or coherent. What are the implications for the new composite entity?

Challenges

- I would also like to hear your views on key areas where challenges remain on different aspects of the women's rights and gender equality agenda, including on specific aspects.
- My own perspective is this: we can point to significant progress in the development of norms and standards, many embodied in law. The gaps are in implementation and accountability.

Opportunities

1. UPR

- We see the UPR as a powerful tool to start bridging that gap.
- Here are a few practical suggestions:
- States under review should ensure that women's rights, and gender perspectives more broadly, are comprehensively integrated in their national reports.

- States undergoing review should ensure effective consultation with women's organizations in the preparation of their national reports.
- States, national human rights institutions, and NGOs should include experts on gender equality and women's rights in their delegations to the UPR as well as to the Human Rights Council itself. Efforts should also be made to support the participation of representatives of women's organizations.
- Civil society's contributions to the UPR process are critical; we encourage leading women's rights organizations to mobilize and coordinate efforts to ensure that issues related to women's human rights receive due attention during the UPR. Positive efforts are already being undertaken, but we encourage further progress in this regard.
- NGOs might consider developing guidelines or a checklist as a tool to assist States and other stakeholders preparing for the UPR to integrate women's human rights into the review.
- A chart of each country's progress and challenges in key areas related to women's human rights would also be a useful tool to help inform the UPR process.
- Joint efforts to track UPR recommendations, to promote accountability for UPR , and to make sure that UPR outcomes are consistent with and do not contradict or undermine the CEDAW and its recommendations would be valuable.
- Look for ways to promote effective follow-up to both Treaty Body and UPR recommendations that aim to protect and promote women's human rights.
- For example, recommendations could be integrated into the work of UN human rights field presences and UN Country Teams, and the technical cooperation programmes of the OHCHR.

2. OHCHR and its Strategic Plan

- The OHCHR is showing serious and very welcome leadership on this agenda.
- One of the six thematic priorities in the High Commissioner's Strategic Management Plan focuses on "countering discrimination, (including) in particular... on the grounds of sex". This is very positive. We are also pleased with the identification of "equality before the law" and "access to justice" as key components to ending such discrimination.
- Similarly, the Office's efforts to mainstream women's human rights and a gender perspective into the policies, programs and activities of the UN system as a whole generate an important multiplier effect across the system.
- We were delighted to hear Mme. Pillay say last week in her annual report to the Council that she had reinforced the gender capacity and expertise in four of OHCHR's regional offices, to help better integrate a gender dimension into national policies and programmes.

3. New Gender Entity

- A final issue I wanted to touch on is the progress in NY in creating a new gender architecture.
- A new consolidated entity holds great potential to increase the impact of efforts to improve the lives of women around the world, through increased focus, streamlining of activities, and by prioritizing field presence.
- We look to see active engagement by the High Commissioner in establishing the new entity, to help maximize synergies and ensure coordination of activities and efforts to advance women's human rights.

Conclusion

- We should be proud of the important progress that has been achieved over the past thirty years toward the realization of women's human rights.
- However, much work remains to be done, not only to address remaining gaps, but also to ensure we maintain the gains already made.
- Thank you and I look forward to hearing your views.