

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF

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Thank you Mr. President.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK Section welcomes the examination of the intersections between culture and violence against women by the Special Rapporteur. WILPF commends the Special Rapporteur for highlighting distinct cultural norms that define gender relations in Western countries which are often not questioned or perceived as culture. We welcome acknowledgement that all forms of cultural essentialism undermine international human rights and the elimination of violence against women.

- In the UK 1 in 4 women will be affected by intimate partner violence.
- Conviction rates in rape cases have fallen from 24% to 5.2% in the last 20 years.
- Women asylum seekers who commence asylum claims with their partners have little protection from the state if they experience inter-familial violence. Choosing to divorce or separate leaves women's status and right to remain uncertain.

We welcome the Special Rapporteur's visit to an NGO-led European Regional Consultation with the National Alliance for Women's Organizations (NAWO) in London in January 2007.

In light of our concerns regarding violence against women in the UK and inadequate legal protection afforded to asylum seekers and refugees experiencing domestic violence we urge the UK Government to continue to interact with the Special Rapporteur in follow-up consultations.

- We urge all member states to review any discriminatory legislation and criminal justice procedures which could exacerbate rather than respond effectively to violence against women.
- We request that the Special Rapporteur recommend that member states integrate education and awareness campaigns on violence against women in school curriculums.
- We would welcome further recommendations from the Special Rapporteur on preventative strategies taking consideration of structural violence both in the public and private sphere.

Thank you Mr. President.