

## 16<sup>th</sup> session of The Human Rights Council

### High Level Segment ( 28.2-2.3)

Two issues were highlighted during the opening of the Human Rights Council and the subsequent high-level segments: The popular demands for democracy in Middle East and the ongoing review process of the Council. Libya and the special session held on 25 February was the main concern. A majority of member and observer states welcomed the special session, and emphasized the importance of the Council to act in emergency situations. A general consensus was reached that the Council has proved itself to be a body of capacity able to act when facing urgent human rights violations that require attention and action, and that it has the tools to respond. The international community must support the work of those peacefully working for democracy and human rights.

The linkages between the HRC, the General Assembly and the Security Council were highlighted during the session, especially in regards to the developments in Libya. HRC and SC were often put in connection and relation to each other: ex UK said the unanimous response in both HRC and SC were remarkable and made the international community come together in unprecedented way. The President of UN General Assembly said in a keynote speech that SC and HRC were expected to defend human rights by the people in the Middle East, and that the Council is in a critical stage of development, in which the relationship with the General Assembly has begun to be debated.

Several countries stressed the need to make sure all countries' human rights violations in the world are addressed – not only a few, and that all states should be held to the same standards. Brazil said that strategic alliances had maintained silence of human rights violations in certain countries, especially important regarding Palestine. Algeria said that HRC:s double standard is dictated by particular states' interests. Certain violations are only questioned when countries don't follow the rules of the strongest members, but the rights of people cannot be selective. United States' Clinton urged for Libya to be excluded from the Council in her statement, as governments who use force against its unarmed civilians have no place in the Council. Gaddafi must be punished. An independent commission of inquiry should be established, and Gaddafi should be referred to ICC. Democratic Republic of Congo addressed its struggle against impunity and sexual violence against women and mentioned the recent trials. DRC asked for assistance to help with these trials, and wondered why the international community has not done more to help punish perpetrators from DRC. He also highlighted that DRC women raped by UN peacekeepers have not received any justice. Venezuela stated that if there is not justice for all, there cannot be justice for anyone. They offered to participate in all OHCHR activities to help the Libyan people. Cuba said that greed for oil, and not for freedom of rights of the Libyan people, was the reason behind states actions. Further stated that the death ratio of armed conflicts in conquest wars past 1990s has been huge. Military expenditures have increased with 59% during this time, in which the US accounted for more than half. Also addressed violence against women.

### **Interactive Dialogue With High Commissioner for Human Rights on her Annual Report ( 3.3)**

The Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay after she presented her annual report.

The High Commissioner said her annual report covered the activities undertaken last year in the framework of the thematic priorities and offered practical examples of the role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in shaping the human rights agenda. Discrimination remained an obstinate obstacle to the realisation of human rights and the empowerment of the vulnerable, and much focus had been on racial discrimination particularly as a follow up to the 2009 Durban Review Conference. Migrants, especially those in irregular situations, were particularly vulnerable to discrimination and were often denied access to essential public services. Concerning violence and abuse against women and girls, the Office had convened a high-level panel to go to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hear directly and engage in a dialogue with victims of sexual violence regarding their needs and their perceptions of remedies and reparations available to them.

Speaking of human rights mechanisms, Ms. Pillay noted the need to close the gap between rhetoric and good intent on one hand and measurable results on the other. The Council had established two new mandates, on the elimination of discrimination of women in law and practice and on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. The establishment of new treaty bodies was welcomed, but this growth needed to be backed with sufficient financial resources, which unfortunately had not been kept apace.

The presentation of the annual report was followed by an interactive dialogue in which 33 countries presented their comments to the High Commissioner on her report including New Zealand, Cuba, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Conference, Egypt, United States, Iraq, Nigeria, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Hungary on behalf of the European Union, Congo, Costa Rica, Spain, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Chile, China, Nigeria on behalf of the African Union, Jordan, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Germany, Australia, Burkina Faso, Pakistan in its national capacity, Ghana, France, Japan, Belgium, India and Iran.

Among other things, speakers said that they commended the High Commissioner's Office in steering the proceedings of the Council in an effective manner and in the rapid response demonstrated during the recent violence and human rights violations in North Africa and the Middle East. Many countries welcomed the activities planned in 2011 for the twenty-fifth anniversary on the Declaration on the Right to Development and the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.

The functioning of the Universal Periodic Review was discussed with a concern for the burden of reporting obligations on small and developing States and the insufficient creation of specific mechanisms to ensure cooperation in these areas. More information was requested on the food crisis with an emphasis on those who had engaged in speculation. Members highlighted the benefits to be derived from the network of field presences which allowed for better engagement of Member States and other key players on the regional and national level, particularly the establishment of the new office in Guinea. Many States mentioned they would like a greater regard placed on the issues of discrimination, in particular discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and violence against women, particularly sexual violence.

### **Presentation of the thematic reports ( by the Office of the High commissioner and the secretary General) by the Deputy High Commissioner ( 4.3)**

-OHCHR Report: Processes and procedures on counter-terrorism. HIV/AIDS: epidemic violence against women impedes services on HIV/AIDS to women. While these structures are well-known, programs that deal with these problems are rare.

-Visit by the Italian president Giorgio Napolitano, who stated Italy's solidarity with the Libyan people and the suffering they are going through. This violence cannot be tolerated - Gaddafi must stop military action against his own people, and the UN plays a central role in this. Women's rights are one of Italy's main priorities: special protection are needed for women and girls, and violence against women serious obstacle to achieve equality. Italy actively supports the implementation of Security Council's resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

### **Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to food( Mr. Olivier de Schutter)**

The Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with Olivier de Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, and Raquel Rolnik, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

Mr. de Schutter said the world had entered in the new era of weather shocks and food prices would still change under the influence of climate change. The question now was how to enable countries to feed themselves. Old recipes were no longer valid and the world must find the way forward for agro ecology, whereby agriculture was done in sync with nature. Agriculture in this approach was seen as a cycle, where waste was used to fertilize the soil. Agro ecology had numerous advantages over industrial agriculture. Apart from the ability to increase yields spectacularly, it was a solution to rural poverty. It meant that rural households could produce more at lower costs, without the risk to enter the vicious cycle of debt. Agro ecology was the best possible response to climate change. Agro ecology provided definitive nutritional advantages to communities that practiced it. However, agro ecology would not emerge spontaneously only because it offered numerous advantages. Governments had the responsibility to prepare the transition to agro ecology and enable access for poor farmers.

In the interactive dialogue, concerning the right to food, speakers said the Special Rapporteur on the right to food had highlighted a positive relationship between agro ecology and the right to food and had underscored the importance of international cooperation with regard to agricultural production. A comprehensive approach to tackle food insecurity with a special focus on long-term structural causes was needed, otherwise, the state of food security in the world might further deteriorate. States should implement public policies supporting the adoption of agro ecological practices by devoting the maximum of their capacities and resources to the progressive realisation of the right to food. There was no question that sustainable agriculture was the preferred choice for governments and farmers, but the fundamental question remained the implementation and institutionalisation of agro ecology in policy and practice. Speakers supported the recommendation made in the report that donors should support agricultural development by investing in technical assistance and capacity building, as well as technology transfer. It was unfortunate that the vagaries of the international system often compelled States with limited resources to rationalise their national balance sheets as opposed to encourage them to introduce new methods and techniques. Speakers endorsed the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, particularly those that urged donors to engage in long-term relationships with partner countries and support South-South cooperation on the dissemination and adoption of agro ecological practices.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue on the right to food (and the right to adequate housing) were Chile, China, Brazil, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Netherlands, Maldives, Nigeria on behalf of the African Group, Cuba, Luxembourg, Germany, Algeria, Israel, Iran, Thailand, Djibouti, United States, Serbia, Honduras, India, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Ecuador, Finland, Norway, Canada, Morocco, Australia, Ghana, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Holy See, Palestine, Qatar, Switzerland, Sudan, Venezuela, Bangladesh, African Union, Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, Uruguay, Ethiopia, and the European Union.

The following national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations also took the floor: Croatian Ombudsman, European Disability Forum, BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency, Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", Human Rights Advocates, Society Threatened Peoples, and China NGO Network for International Exchange.

### **Clustered interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders ( Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya)**

Many states were concerned about the failures of states to protect WHRDs, and that many violations are being perpetrated by agents or state representatives. The focus on women and defenders of gender rights was generally appreciated, with a reached consensus that women are particularly affected as human rights defenders. United States wanted to know how the Council and other mechanisms can act to protect WHRDs. Pakistan wanted to draw a clear distinction between violence against WHRDs committed by the state and that committed by non-state actors. Sudan wanted to set up a number of judicial measures to address WHRDs. Bangladesh felt that the SR has 'diverted from the real and universal issues of women defenders' situation, and that the report does not reflect the universal situation of WHRDs. Uzbekistan stated that the observations within the report does not reflect the real situation within Uzbekistan.

### **Follow up of the HRC Special Sessions on Côte d'Ivoire and on Libya ( 14.3)**

#### **Cote d'Ivoire**

The OHCHR representative reported that the situation of human rights in Cote d'Ivoire since the elections on 28 November 2010 has deteriorated. Extrajudicial killings, disappearances etc. have increased, and there is a fear of an impending civil war, as well as increased instability in the region with masses of refugees. The perpetrators are groups loyal to the ex-president Gbagbo, who use media to incite violence and hatred. A climate of impunity exists, which encourages sexual violence. This crisis has affected health and education services, and obstructs the work of the UN peacekeeping operations in the area. Namibia urged the international community to not forget the people of Cote d'Ivoire amidst other events. Egypt said that the only way to solve the conflict is to respect the electoral result, and that action needs to be taken in line with UNSCR 1962. All countries welcomed the African Union's decision to confirm Ouattara as the president, and the need for the Council to remain active and try its best to prevent civil war. Canada and Slovenia urged Special Commission to investigate the violations taking place. Amnesty International emphasized women as the forgotten victims subject to sexual violence, and highlighted the fact that serious violations are committed by both sides.

#### **Libya**

**The Deputy High Commissioner** reported that the human rights situation in Libya has continued to deteriorate. Killings and rape remains prominent, and humanitarian assistance still hindered. She stated OHCHR:s extreme concern over the massive, uncontrolled circulation of arms throughout the country. EU supported a commission of inquiry, and the suspension of Libya from HRC and

expressed concern over the worrying proportions of immigrants, which could cause a humanitarian crisis at Libya's borders. **UK** highlighted the strong response by the HRC, the General Assembly, and the Security Council, which shows international communities' unity in outrage of the events. **Maldives** urged powers to not use a 'wait-and-see' approach and instead take action now.

### **Adoption of the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review on the United States ( 18.3)**

Troika : France, Japan and Cameroun

Mr Harold Hongju Koh, Legal Adviser, Department of State, representing the US Delegation went through the ten main thematic areas of the Report. Delegations and NGOs made their comments afterwards.

- Regarding discriminations of minorities such as native Americans, Latin Americans and LGTB, progress must still be made. Mainly regarding ECOSOC rights. Although consultations have been undertaken with tribal leaders for example, the progresses made remain insufficient.
- Regarding Capital punishment, many countries and NGOs urge the USA to abolish death penalty and/ or set a moratorium.
- Regarding terrorism, most countries asked for Guantanamo to be closed. Mr Koh said it is still on the agenda for the Obama administration. He stressed that some of the Guantanamo detainees have already been transferred to other prisons.
- Regarding special laws concerning terrorism, Mr Koh said that the National Security Interests are prevailing. However, some delegations and NGOs have remind the USA that domestic laws should be in line with International laws.
- Regarding the ratifications of the International core Human Rights Treaties, Mr Koh mentioned that the current administration is pushing the ratification forwards. However the super majority of Parliament being necessary, it is a slow process.
- Regarding immigration, Mr Koh stressed that the opportunity to stay in the US has been given to many refugees. However, many delegations and NGOs have mentioned difficulties for migrants such as: discrimination in housing, education and healthcare, as well as racial profiling.
- Regarding health insurance, some countries and NGOs stressed that a maternity leave should be compulsory and health care accessible to all, without discrimination.
- Investigations about war crimes in Irak and Afghanistan have been asked by some delegations.
- It has also been asked to the US to become a member of the International Court of Justice

The UPR USA report was adopted.

### **Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, ID with Committee of Independent Experts in international humanitarian and human rights(21.3)**

Judge Mary Davis, Chairperson of the Committee of Independent Experts, stated that the committee was mandated to monitor and assess any legal, legal or other proceeding undertaken by either side of the conflict. However, they have not had access to first-hand, updated info on investigations and legal proceedings, as the Israeli policy is to refuse cooperation with the “Goldstone process”, however, the Palestinian Authority cooperated. Israel has dedicated significant resources to investigations, over 400 allegations of operational misconduct in Gaza, but much remains to be done. Concerns raised about participations of victims and transparency continue to be relevant. The

Committee are also concerned over the duration of investigations, over two years since the alleged violations. As for Palestinian investigations, its Independent Investigation Commission has not been granted access to documents from either Israel nor Gaza authorities. In Palestine, positive and important developments have occurred but there are still concerns over accountability mechanisms not being duly activated. The Committee is extremely concerned that authorities have not conducted any investigations into attacks with rockets and mortars against Israel.

In the general debate, **Israel** argued that the Council has not addressed the attacks against the Israeli people, and that the political rhetoric and discourse in the HRC does not represent the situation in the region. Most countries regretted Israel's non-cooperation, and urged both parties to respect International Law. **Egypt** argued for the need of both sides to implement the recommendations from the Goldstone report. **Brazil** stressed the need of reparations to the victims. **EU** said that investigations should always be in compliance with International Law. **Saudi Arabia** said that Israel always absolves its international responsibilities, which run counter to International Law. **Maldives** reminded the Council of its duties to protect human rights. **United States** was dismayed over the disproportionate focus on Israel in the Council, and urged that all countries in the Council should be scrutinized on the same standards.

#### **Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories, ID with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.**

Richard Falk, the Special Rapporteur, presented his report. He's been denied access to Israel (and thereby to Palestine) since 2008. He said that no recommendations have been implemented from the Goldstone report, which undermines International Law and the HRC, as well as confirms Palestinians' skepticism of the international community and the UN to uphold their rights. An intensification of deterioration of human rights in east Jerusalem. The situation is intolerable, and is a form of ethnic cleansing. Systematic discrimination against Palestinians occur on a daily basis. Israel has not lifted the ban on export as promised, and the settlement expansion in east Jerusalem continues. In the general debate, **Venezuela** stated that Israel's developments of settlements cannot continue, and called again to halt Israel's blockade. **Pakistan** said that the international community must ensure future Israeli cooperation, and that the issue of detained children is serious. **Brazil**, which recently recognized Palestine, was worried about restrictions of NGOs in Israel, as well as the illegal settlements. **Turkey** declared its willingness to help both parties to mediate in peace dialogues. **United States** said the mandated was one-sided and the report flawed, not all countries held to the same standards.

#### **Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories cont'd: Presentation of HC reports**

**Pillay** introduced four reports under item 7, three of which are accessible now: One which reflects the responses of members states to the secretary-general's dissemination efforts, the report on the implementation of the independent fact-finding mission on the incident of the humanitarian flotilla, in which the High Commissioner disagrees with three legal interpretations of Israel's Turkel Commission. Third is the periodic report on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, based on the monitoring by the OHCHR presence in Palestine, highlighting several issues, such as the violence committed by Israeli settlers, and detention of Palestinian children by Israeli authorities. It also concerns violations perpetrated by Palestinians, such as the use of death penalty and the restrictions of civil society. Many activities of the Israeli authorities continue to be in violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws. The OHCHR remains deeply concerned as to how these violations deny Palestinians' their right to self-determination. Also, rocket attacks from Gaza are illegal and must stop – terrorize Israeli population. The report urges all parties to commit to fulfill their international obligations.

In the following general debate, the statement from Turkey regarding the flotilla was strong, and stated that Israel has breached International Law, and committed grave violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law. Israel has not provided any information to the High Commissioner to facilitate the report of the proceedings of the implementations, and has refused to cooperate, which is very regrettable. The Turkish Ambassador called the Turkel report a joke that adds insult to injury. He further stated that accountability is not negotiable, and that no country should help Israel to shy away from its international obligations.

### **Appointment of mandate holders ( 23.3)**

The Council appointed a Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; members of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; a member of the Working Group of Experts on people of African descent; members of the Expert Mechanism on the rights of indigenous peoples; and elected members of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee. The Council also concluded its general debate on technical assistance and capacity building.

The following persons were appointed as Members of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice: Emma Aouij (Tunisia) Mercedes Barquet (Mexico), Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia), Frances Raday (Israel/United Kingdom), Eleonora Zielinska (Poland).

### **Side Events**

#### **SIDE EVENT: ENDING VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL SANCTIONS BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 3 March**

The seminar discussed how violence and discrimination affects the LGBTI community in different parts of the world. Kashal Jaqueline, from an LGBTI organization in Uganda said that 39 countries in Africa criminalizes homosexuality, using draconian, colonial laws. South Africa remains the only country to allow same-sex marriage. In Uganda, proposals to install death penalties for gay people have been put forward. The death of David Kato is one example of increasing violence against the LGBTI community, also curative rape in South Africa. There is a need to take proactive measures to the LGBTI community. UNAIDS said that the impact of these punitive laws on LGBTI communities bars an efficient response to combat AIDS, as the vulnerability to AIDS is dependent on a person's legal and social status - inequality between men and women is a major reason for the AIDS epidemic. The LGBTI community is never explicitly addressed in preventive measures, rather in general terms. Mariska from the Blue Diamond Society in Nepal said that several changes had occurred in Nepal, where the government has granted support to equal rights on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, despite this, it is difficult to change bureaucratic attitudes, and implementation remains inadequate. In reality, Security Council resolutions are not easy to maintain and uphold. John Fisher from ARC said that there exists a false dichotomy between the 'West and the rest' in AIDS issues, and that criminalization of homosexuality often is a colonial legacy. During the discussion, the activists urged the delegates to speak to the Ugandan government, as it tends to act when pressured by the international community. Uganda is a member of the Human Rights Council and should be held accountable.

#### **SIDE EVENT: GENDER AND DISARMAMENT, 7 March**

On the occasion of the 2011 International Women's Day, WILPF held a seminar entitled "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control." Building on the General Assembly resolution 65/69, the seminar addressed the human rights impact on disarmament and arms control from a gender perspective, with participants from the Republic of Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK). The speakers shared their individual experiences as women's rights activists in their respective countries. The seminar invited activists, scholars, NGO workers and ambassadors to have a discussion on the implications of the UN General Assembly resolution and was chaired by WILPF Secretary General Madeleine Rees.

**Annie Matundu Mbambi, President of WILPF DRC**, spoke about the inclusion of women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes and how the UNSCR 1325 can be implemented in post-conflict DRC. Today, women are disadvantaged by the DDR process, ca 3% of women participating in conflict are disarmed, which neglects the participatory aspect of 1325. It was further argued that specific programs are needed to include women, as NGO work is not sufficient for disarmament. **Adilia Caravaca, International Board member of WILPF Costa Rica**, spoke about the increased presence of the military in Costa Rica and the impact on the 'culture of peace' and women that has prevailed in Costa Rica, since the country, after civil war, abolished the army. **Sameena Nazir, Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA)**, in Pakistan addressed the ideological and economic interests behind Pakistan's present militarization and internal insecurity. Small arms are cheap and available for purchase everywhere. The culture of militarism is fueled by media and religious forces. The military expenditures divert resources from economic, social and cultural rights of the people, which especially impacts women.

**Rebecca Johnson, ICAN**, spoke about women's movements in the UK in relation to nuclear weapons and gave an overview on the UK's arms sale around the world.

**Maria Butler, WILPF PeaceWomen**, in New York, said that we need to look at the root causes rather than the consequences of conflict. Small arms used all over the world, and there is a pressing need to incorporate disarmament into the implementation process of WPS agenda. She also reemphasized that UNSCR 1325 was not drafted to make war safe for women, but in an attempt to challenge violence and end conflict, and called upon UN member states and civil society to open a dialogue as a first step leading towards a discussion on the integration of disarmament in the implementation process of UNSCR 1325. **Ray Acheson, WILPF Reaching Critical Will**, pointed out that it is an international legal obligation of states to incorporate 1325 into their work. She also emphasized the importance of bringing women's and security issues into the forum of disarmament, and the importance of understanding that gender perspectives and the participation of women is not only a human rights concern but also a security issue. Ray also mentioned the issue of military spending diverting resources from other sectors.

#### **SIDE EVENT: WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN MESOAMERICA, 8 March**

In connection to the report by the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, AWID held a side event to highlight the challenges facing women's human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Mesoamerica, one of the most violent and dangerous places for WHRDs. Sexual violence against WHRDs is on the increase, as well as violence against relatives of activists. Today, few resources exist for the protection of WHRDs, but women have developed types of resistance and protection for themselves, such as communication networks. What is needed is a systematic overview of violations of women's human rights defenders, and therefore documentation is important.

**Maya from Guatemala** said that the country is far from peace. No rule of law exists, and it is a

constant risk to be WHRD, who are considered to be the new enemies of the state instead of communists. Kidnappings and murders are ordered by the state, whose structures are permeated by hierarchy and sexism. Access to justice therefore depends on gender, ethnicity, age, geography etc. Violence against women and their relatives is effective in stigmatizing women in society, and this gender-based violence is reinforced on state-level. **Patricia** spoke of the situation in **Honduras**, which after the coup d'etat has witnessed increasingly repressive laws and a growth of fundamentalism and impunity. Femicide is widespread in Honduras – over 5000 women are killed annually, the majority between 15-29 years old. Laws against terrorism are used against WHRDs, who are kept in illegal detention. Threats come from religious forces against advocates for sexual and reproductive rights, and state actors are defending these actors instead of the HRDs. Mexico has seen progressive steps to end sexual violence and other types of violence against women. However, the state has not acted against impunity, and implementation is lacking. **Ms. Sekaggya**, Special Rapporteur, said that a major issue facing WHRDs is the militarization of the region, also stressed the need for documentation. The Special Rapporteur on Minorities emphasized the necessity of networks, and wanted to outline concrete measures that can be taken, such as the provision of prepaid cell phones, protected transportation, and safe places to meet and mobilize including shelters.

### **SIDE EVENT: WOMEN'S RIGHT TO FOOD, FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY, 9 March**

The Special Rapporteur on the right to food, **Olivier de Schutter**, started his intervention by stating that his mandate has not focused enough on issues of gender and food, but that he hoped to focus the 2011 special report on this subject. He identified several critical challenges within this area in the context of discrimination. One example is that women are discriminated in access to resources – widows are not allowed to inherit, and services provided to farmers by the state are usually for men. The modernization of agriculture has also had gender impacts. Food crops have become cash crops. Choices to spend cash are made by men. Women need to gain the rights of the land they use – entitling rights are crucial and land reforms need to be made. However, these changes need to happen in the context of a larger land reform and with sensitivity to gender issues as many reforms may have unknown gender implications. So far, reforms have only led to a concentration of land to rich men. Priorities in this area should therefore be focused on removing discriminatory laws and customs, but we need to be aware that social customs also need to change if sufficient and sustainable reforms are to be realized.

**Marcia Villareal, FAO Rome** said that 925 million people are hungry every day - mostly in the Asia Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa. The current food price crisis have disproportionately affected the urban poor, rural net buyers, and female headed households – who are affected as they spend a larger proportion of their income on food, and has less access to resources. Resources are crucial - in Nepal, 8% of landowners are women, and in USA 12%. If women had more resources, productivity as well as broader socioeconomic gains could be made. Statistics have shown that if women had more access to land, a 12-17% reduction of world hunger would occur which means 100-150 million people lifted out of hunger. This would also lead to better health for children etc., as women's access to land builds human capital. Without women's participation and empowerment we can forget to achieve MDG number one. We need to have a rights-based food approach - to integrate the right to food into all agricultural policies, increase investment in women's specific needs, and ensure gender-sensitive agricultural policy. **Devaki Jain** talked about food battles and the global shift from agriculture to service that has deep implications for women. To achieve equality, we need to bring back agenda of the poorest women – and incorporate the development agenda that has been missing from agricultural policies. This can be made through an interplay between civil society, interest-groups, and the government.

**Alexandra from WOCAN** mentioned the overall discrimination of women in development as key

in food security, and that we need to understand the intersectionality of the issue of right to food. What we need is women's networks, collective action, and also more data collection.

**SIDE EVENT: How to link UNSCR 1325 with Human Rights Mechanisms, Femmes-Afrique Solidarité, 17 March**

UNSCR 1325 is based on human rights, and recalls both the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. We need to explore further how to use human rights mechanisms to ensure 1325 is implemented. **Isha Dyfan, head of OHCHR's gender unit**, focused on prevention, and said that violence against women is a human rights issue. Using the existing human rights mechanisms is fundamental to address these issues in order to implement 1325 and address roots and causes. States' fulfillment of their obligations can be assessed through special procedures, such as the UPR. The mechanisms to implement 1325 are there, but they need to be used. **Bente Angell-Hansen, Ambassador of Norway**, said we must continue to push for the implementation of 1325, and take a 'inch-by-inch' approach. Human rights mainstreaming into the UN is important, as well as ex the UPR, which is useful as states need to confirm if they endorse recommendations or not. The HRC must take more responsibility and need to create a stronger link with the Security Council. Need closer cooperation between Geneva and NY – ex the OHCHR and UN Women. There is a disconnection between women's reality and high politics, and the underlying needs have to be addressed as part of a strategy to really achieve change. **Yvette Chesson-Wurey, Liberia**, stated that there had been no women in the Cote d'Ivoire peace negotiations, which was a big mistake. In Liberia, there exists a strong political will to achieve gender equality, which is why it has been so successful. **Eloma Alaga** emphasized the role of early warning system that can be based on existing instruments. Many actors working within this area, but few coordinated efforts are made. She stressed that no ONE strategy is enough to address the variety of issues within the Women, Peace and Security agenda – we need a multi-sectored-approach. Today, we don't lack instruments, the problem lies within the implementation. The African Union's Peace and Security Council has been a progressive instrument, and Nepal is a useful framework. However, the actors are still only men. We need to move from rhetoric to action.

### ***Human Rights Situation in Belarus, 4 March 2011, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m***

The meeting on Belarus was concerned with the human rights violations during the protests after the last presidential elections on December 19. The panelists stated that the protests were used as pretext to crack down NGOs and media representatives. Three main groups were especially affected by the governmental actions, 1. human rights defenders, 2. journalists, 3. lawyers. In terms of future actions, the panelists stated that international human rights organisations had to become more present in Belarus, continuing observation, dissemination of information, awareness-raising, and pressure on authority. Some attendees made comments. The German Ambassador commented that as a next step the Human Rights Council should find a solution to address the issues of freedom of assembly, national minorities, and the death penalty. He stated that Belarus was the only country in Europe still executing the death penalty, and called for a moratorium. The panelists concluded that realistic steps would entail the provision of fair trials, freedom of media and the protection of human rights defenders. A follow up would encompass the drafting of a resolution, which should be shared with the council.

### ***Human Rights Defenders in the Caucasus, 11 March 2011, 11 a.m – 1 p.m.***

During the meeting, the main issues raised were the situation of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and the Northern Caucasus. The representative from the Azeri Human Rights House stated that the organisation will close its premises and activities, as the government currently suppressed civil society institutions and small independent newspapers, also suing NGO activists and lawyers. According to the Special Rapporteur of the Council of Europe, people were prevented from protests, meetings and gatherings after the parliamentary election. The representative of the Armenian Helsinki Association stated that there was no open war against NGOs in Armenia, but that NGOs working on human rights issues were immediately blamed for any connection to Azerbaijan. The representative from Shahkhatun Armenia (Political Prisoners' Wives) further stated that the human rights field in Armenia was politicised, and that there is little cooperation between the government and civil society. The representative of the Human Rights Centre in Georgia commented that some journalists and minority rights defenders had to leave the country due to governmental pressures, and that restrictions for journalists and human rights defenders were particularly imposed in terms of activities on occupied territories. The representative of the Caucasian Knot stated that in the Northern Caucasus, society itself had become threatening, being a source of terrorist acts such as the Jihadists. He showed concern about the lack of attention from the international community, stating that reports on the human rights situation were not enough and that response and action from the European and American side had to be taken now. A representative from a Georgian NGO commented that many human rights defenders stopped their activism due to threats and smear campaigns, especially in the regions. In conclusion, the chair asked about the role of the international community. Concerning Azerbaijan, one possible reaction could entail that international organisations, which were not allowed to go to the country, should also ensure that the Azeri government would not be invited to their countries. Furthermore economic sanctions as done in Belarus could be effective as well. The panel concluded that mechanisms would be needed to ensure that follow-up activities would take place. In this respect, NGO Media Global commented that in order to take further actions, the existing structures and frameworks had to be assessed first.