



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 51ma SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE SULLO STATO DELLE DONNE DEL CONSIGLIO ECONOMICO E SOCIALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato ieri dall'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, Nunzio Apostolico, alla 51ma Sessione della Commissione sullo stato delle donne del Consiglio Economico e Sociale delle Nazioni Unite:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Madam Chair,

On the occasion of the 51st session of the Commission of the Status of Women, my delegation welcomes the progress made in favour of women over the years and hopes that positive achievements in this field may continue to establish a sane and solid foundation for the future.

However, it seems incongruous that, at a time when the sensitivity for women's issues appears stronger than ever, the world is now obliged to confront new forms of violence and slavery directed especially at women.

It is therefore appropriate that the Commission has chosen this year as its priority theme "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child." Every day, violations of the rights of women, adolescents, and young girls are committed and even tolerated in many fields. Women bear the brunt of the world's child prostitution, sexual exploitation, abuse, domestic violence, child labour and human trafficking. The international sex trade has become an important industry as degrading as almost any mistreatment of women prior to it. This trade is often passed over in silence because it is considered a part of supposedly democratic freedoms and is too deeply rooted in places or is too lucrative to confront, so my delegation commends those states and organizations that have stepped forward in recent times to combat and draw attention to this scourge.

The mistreatment of women is a longstanding reality in many places and a disregard for the age and vulnerability of young girls in particular is especially repugnant. If we wish to engage in a sustained process to stop and reverse this phenomenon, peoples and cultures will have to find common ground that can safely

underpin human relations everywhere due to our shared humanity. There is still a profound need to strive to uphold the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, with special attention to the most vulnerable of society, our children and all the girls among them.

We would also do well to examine why women and especially younger women are so vulnerable. This appears to be due to the inferior status bestowed upon women in certain places and upon female infants in particular. In some local traditions they are thought of as a financial burden and are thus eliminated even before birth. In this way, abortion, often considered a tool of liberation, is ironically employed by women against women. Even those allowed to live are sometimes considered as if they were a piece of property best disposed of as soon as possible. This is to be found in many parts of the world, due to prejudicial traditions extraneous to what should be a universally available and safe nurturing environment for girls. Besides the usual thriving channels of trafficking in persons, even the institution of marriage is sometimes misused to give a safe façade to sexual exploitation and slave labour by means of what is known as "mail order brides" and "temporary brides".

The trade which results in the exploitation and profit of women forms a driving motive in this equation. No one profits from this except the traffickers themselves and the clients. In order to put an end to the violation of human rights of trafficked women and girls, it is not enough to sensationalize their tragic plight; rather there is a need to trace the question back to the market that exists due to the demand which makes such trade possible and profitable. Thus, if the reason behind the violence visited on women and girls is mostly cultural prejudice, exploitation and profit, which body should be mandated to intervene in order to overcome this situation?

This is a clear question of human rights, since trafficked women have their right to life and dignity violated. Health, freedom and security, are all compromised in such circumstances, to say nothing of universal rights regarding torture, violence, cruelty and degrading treatment. For younger women it can also be a question of forced marriage, the violation of the right to education, the right to work and the right to self-determination. Nor should we limit the complexities of trafficking to a few social laws or customs, the construction of a refuge here and there and the social reinsertion of the women in question. Ways must be found to let them go home safely and without shame, and not merely have them repatriated; and if women do decide to travel abroad for work, they should be able to do so safely.

Raising awareness is a simple and effective means to combat this phenomenon at the local level. Rural villages where the search for employment impels girls to seek work elsewhere need to know as a community how to deal openly with the risks to their young people. Organizations with a proven track record already exist and could assist communities in this way. Local and national politicians also need to be brought to account for their policies in this regard.

The promotion of women will be achieved not only by the legitimate vindication of women's rights. With that there must also be established a fresh appreciation of authentically feminine values in the heart of our societies.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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