



**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**



Elimination of violence against women

Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/45

The Commission on Human Rights,

Reaffirming that discrimination on the basis of sex is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights instruments, and that its elimination is an integral part of efforts towards the elimination of violence against women,

Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights (A/CONF.157/23) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993,

Recalling all its previous resolutions on the elimination of violence against women, in particular its resolution 1994/45 of 4 March 1994, in which it decided to appoint a special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences,

Noting all General Assembly resolutions relevant to elimination of violence against women,

Recalling the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in September 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20, chap. I), follow-up action by the Commission on the Status of Women on violence against women and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,

Recalling also Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women, peace and security, and acknowledging the relevance of the study of the Secretary-General entitled *Women, Peace and Security* submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and UNIFEM’s recent study entitled *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-Building*,

Welcoming the significant work throughout the world over the past decade to eliminate violence against women and girls as reflected in the final report submitted by the current Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2003/75 and addenda), which gives an overview of the work done and is a possible reference for and valuable contribution to future work in this area,

Reaffirming the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes,

Recalling the inclusion of gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (A/CONF.183/9), which affirms that rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence constitute, in defined circumstances,

a crime against humanity and/or a war crime, and reiterating that acts of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict can constitute serious violations or grave breaches of international humanitarian law,

Deeply concerned that some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee and internally displaced women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, the girl child, women with disabilities, elderly women, widows and women in situations of armed conflict are often especially targeted or vulnerable to violence, as are women who are otherwise discriminated against,

Convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a differentiated manner for women and girls, and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination and the limitation or denial of their human rights, and recognizing the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action, including effective implementation of national legislation, against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination against women,

Expressing its appreciation of the initiatives of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to combat violence against women at the international, regional and national levels, as well as of the *World Report on Violence and Health* launched by the World Health Organization in 2002, particularly its consideration of gender-based violence,

1. *Welcomes* the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and takes note of her report, entitled “Developments in the area of violence against women (1994-2002)” (E/CN.4/2003/75 and Corr.1 and Add.1-2);

2. *Notes with interest* the conclusion of the Special Rapporteur that while at the normative level the needs of women are generally adequately addressed, the challenges lie in ensuring respect for and effective implementation of existing laws and standards, and urges States to consider the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur when formulating policies and programmes;

3. *Welcomes* the increasing attention given to violence against women at the national, regional and international levels since the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and through the treaty bodies as well as special mechanisms of the Commission;

4. *Affirms* that the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life, and including domestic violence, crimes committed in the name of honour, crimes committed in the name of passion, trafficking in women and girls, traditional practices harmful to women, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, female infanticide, dowry-related violence and deaths, acid attacks and violence related to commercial sexual exploitation as well as economic exploitation;

5. *Strongly condemns* all acts of violence against women and girls and in this regard calls, in accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, for the elimination of all forms

of gender-based violence in the family, within the general community and where perpetrated or condoned by the State, and emphasizes the duty of Governments to refrain from engaging in violence against women and to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women and to take appropriate and effective action concerning acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State, by private persons or by armed groups or warring factions, and to provide access to just and effective remedies and specialized, including medical, assistance to victims;

6. *Affirms*, in this light, that violence against women constitutes a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and that violence against women impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms;

7. *Strongly condemns* physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, which encompasses, but is not limited to, battering, sexual abuse of women and girls in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, crimes committed against women in the name of honour, crimes committed in the name of passion, traditional practices harmful to women, incest, early and forced marriages, non-spousal violence and violence related to commercial sexual exploitation as well as economic exploitation;

8. *Stresses* that all forms of violence against women occur within the context of de jure and de facto discrimination against women and the lower status accorded to women in society and are exacerbated by the obstacles women often face in seeking remedies from the State;

9. *Emphasizes* that violence against women has an impact on their physical and mental health, including their reproductive and sexual health and, in this regard, encourages States to ensure that women have access to comprehensive and accessible health services and programmes and to health-care providers who are knowledgeable and trained to meet the needs of patients who have been subjected to violence, in order to minimize the adverse physical and psychological consequences of violence;

10. *Also emphasizes* that violence against women and girls, including rape, female genital mutilation, incest, early and forced marriage, violence related to commercial sexual exploitation, including trafficking, as well as economic exploitation and other forms of sexual violence, can increase their vulnerability to the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and aggravate the conditions fostering the spread of HIV/AIDS;

11. *Reminds* Governments that their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be implemented fully with regard to violence against women, taking into account general recommendation 19 adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session, reaffirms the commitment to accelerate the achievement of universal ratification of the Convention, and urges all States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to consider, as a matter of priority, doing so;

12. *Urges* States parties to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

13. *Also urges* States parties to limit the extent of any reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to formulate any such reservations as precisely and as narrowly as possible, to ensure that no reservations are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention, to review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them and to withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention;

14. *Stresses* that States have an affirmative duty to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls and must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of all forms of violence against women and girls, and calls upon States:

(a) To apply international human rights norms and to consider, as a matter of priority, becoming party to international human rights instruments that relate to violence against women and girls, and to implement fully their international obligations;

(b) To fully achieve and implement the goals set and commitments made relating to eliminating violence against women contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in September 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20, chap. I) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;

(c) To take all measures to empower women and strengthen their economic independence and to protect and promote the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to allow women and girls to protect themselves better against violence and, in this regard, to give priority to education, training, economic opportunity and political participation of women;

(d) To condemn violence against women and not invoke custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion or culture to avoid their obligations to eliminate such violence;

(e) To address the specific circumstances facing girls and young women in relation to violence, especially sexual violence, including its immediate and long-term consequences;

(f) To intensify efforts to develop and/or utilize legislative, educational, social and other measures aimed at the prevention of violence against women, including the adoption and implementation of laws, the dissemination of information, active involvement with community-based players, and the training of legal, judicial and health personnel, and, where possible, through developing and strengthening support services;

(g) To enact and, where necessary, reinforce or amend domestic legislation, including measures to enhance the protection of victims, to investigate, prosecute, punish and redress the wrongs done to women and girls subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society, in custody or in situations of armed conflict, to ensure that such legislation conforms with relevant international human rights instruments and humanitarian law, and to take action to investigate and punish persons who perpetrate acts of violence against women;

(h) To formulate, implement and promote, at all appropriate levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women, guided by, inter alia, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as relevant regional instruments pertaining to the elimination of violence against women;

(i) To support initiatives undertaken by women's organizations and non-governmental organizations on the elimination of violence against women and to establish and/or strengthen, at the national level, collaborative relationships with relevant non-governmental and community-based organizations, and with public and private sector institutions, aimed at the development and effective implementation of provisions and policies relating to violence against women, including in the area of support services for victims;

(j) To intensify efforts to raise collective and individual awareness about violence against women, to highlight the role of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of violence against women, and to encourage and support initiatives to promote attitudinal and behavioural change on the part of, and the rehabilitation of, perpetrators of violence against women;

(k) To develop and/or enhance, including through funding, training programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational, police, correctional service, military, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and immigration personnel, in order to prevent the abuse of power leading to violence against women and to sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence;

(l) To examine the impact of, and take measures to address, gender role stereotypes that contribute to the prevalence of violence against women, including in cooperation with the United Nations system, regional organizations, civil society, the media and other relevant actors;

15. *Strongly condemns* violence against women committed in situations of armed conflict, such as murder, rape, including systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, and calls for effective responses to these violations of international human rights and humanitarian law;

16. *Acknowledges* the inclusion of gender-related crimes in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and in the Elements of Crimes, and urges States to ratify or accede to the Rome Statute, which entered into force on 1 July 2002;

17. *Stresses the importance of* efforts to eliminate impunity for violence against women in situations of armed conflict, including by prosecuting gender-related crimes and crimes of sexual violence in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Tribunal for Rwanda;

18. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and in particular the inclusion of crimes against women and girls in its Statute, and the creation of a Victims and Witnesses Unit to provide protective measures, counselling and other appropriate assistance;

19. *Urges* the integration of a gender perspective into all efforts to eliminate impunity;

20. *Urges* States to integrate a gender perspective into commissions of inquiry and commissions for achieving truth and reconciliation, and invites the Special Rapporteur to report, as appropriate, on these mechanisms;

21. *Also urges* States to provide gender-sensitive training to all actors, as appropriate, in peacekeeping missions in dealing with victims, particularly women and girls, of violence, including sexual violence and, in this regard, acknowledges the important role of peace support operations personnel in eliminating violence against women, and calls upon States to promote, and relevant agencies of the United Nations system and regional organizations to ensure, implementation of the Ten Rules Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets;

22. *Further urges* States to mainstream a gender perspective into national immigration and asylum policies, regulations and practices, as appropriate, in order to promote and protect the rights of all women, including the consideration of steps to recognize gender-related persecution and violence when assessing grounds for granting refugee status and asylum;

23. *Urges* States and the United Nations system to give attention to, and encourages greater international cooperation in systematic research and the collection, analysis and dissemination of data, including data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant information, on the extent, nature and consequences of violence against women and girls, and on the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes for combating this violence;

24. *Calls upon* States to include in reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of relevant United Nations human rights instruments sex- and age-disaggregated data and information pertaining to violence against women, including measures to eliminate traditional or customary practices harmful to women and girls, and other measures taken to implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and other instruments relevant to the elimination of violence against women;

25. *Calls upon* States to consider establishing appropriate national mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation of measures taken to eliminate violence against women and girls, including through the use of national indicators;

26. *Encourages* the Special Rapporteur to respond effectively to reliable information that comes before her and requests all Governments to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the performance of her mandated tasks and duties, to supply all information requested, including with regard to implementation of her recommendations, and to respond to the Special Rapporteur's visits and communications;

27. *Invites* the Special Rapporteur to continue to cooperate with other special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and chairpersons of the working groups of the special procedures of the Commission, including, where appropriate, undertaking joint missions, joint reports, urgent appeals and communications;

28. *Encourages* the Special Rapporteur, with a view to promoting greater efficiency and effectiveness, as well as enhancing her access to the information necessary to fulfil her duties, to continue to cooperate with regional intergovernmental organizations and any of their mechanisms engaged in the promotion of human rights of women;

29. *Welcomes* the increasing efforts and important contributions at the regional level to eliminate all forms of violence against women and encourages States to build upon these successful regional initiatives, including those mentioned in the report of the Special Rapporteur;

30. *Requests* special rapporteurs responsible for various human rights questions, United Nations organs and bodies, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, and encourages the human rights treaty bodies, to continue to give consideration to violence against women within their respective mandates, to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the performance of her mandated tasks and duties and, in particular, to respond to her requests for information on violence against women, its causes and consequences;

31. *Renews its request* to the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Special Rapporteur with all necessary assistance, in particular the staff and resources required to perform all mandated functions, especially in carrying out and following up on missions undertaken either separately or jointly with other special rapporteurs and working groups, and adequate assistance for periodic consultations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and all other treaty bodies;

32. *Decides* that the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, should be renewed for a period of three years;

33. *Requests* the Special Rapporteur to report annually to the Commission on Human Rights, beginning at its sixtieth session, on activities relating to her mandate;

34. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the reports of the Special Rapporteur are brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session, as well as to the attention of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

35. *Decides* to continue consideration of the question as a matter of high priority at its sixtieth session;

36. *Recommends* the following draft decision to the Economic and Social Council for adoption:

“The Economic and Social Council, taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/45 of 23 April 2003, endorses the Commission’s decision to renew for a period of three years the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

“The Council approves the Commission’s request to the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Special Rapporteur with all necessary assistance, in particular the staff and resources required to perform all mandated functions, especially in carrying out and following up on mission undertaken either separately or jointly with other special rapporteurs and working groups, and adequate assistance for periodic consultations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and all other treaty bodies.”

See chap. XII. E/CN.4/2003/L.11/Add.4]

[Adopted without a vote.