

Written Statement from Project Five-O for 2008 CSW

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty -second Session
25 February -7 March 2008

The member organizations of Project Five-O: International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of University Women, Soroptimist International and Zonta International, each in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, are keenly interested in the priority theme for this fifty -second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women."

For more than twenty -five years our organizations have partnered together as Project Five-O to provide economic opportunities, education and training for thousands of local women of all ages in developing countries and countries in transition. Programs funded through Project five-O offer opportunities for women to acquire skills and income that often broaden their role in the family and community as well as improve the well-being of their family. Each of our organizations also carries out programs and advocacy for the advancement of the status of women and girls worldwide. Project Five-O is proud to have made this long-term contribution to building the capacity of women at the community level to enhance their individual and collective potential, but we recognize also that these efforts often require other support to insure sustainability. Micro-enterprises resulting from some of our projects need maintenance through insurance, savings mobilization, trade opportunities and technical assistance.

Project Five- O encourages the development of Women's Funds at local, national, regional and international levels. The mission and mandate of such funds is to provide for women's rights work and the building of social movements to sustain development and gender equality work.

Project Five-O organizations strongly support efforts of national governments to augment resources that provide more funding for programs that empower women and promote gender equality. We also applaud the cooperation with UN agencies that has resulted in enhanced gender-responsive budgeting practices. The participation of women in creating gender-responsive budgets is critical to enhancing this process. However, the lack of adequate resources has been one factor at the national level that has hindered progress toward the fulfillment of commitments made by governments on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Beijing Platform for Action called for sufficient resources to be allocated to national machineries and other institutions that can contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action. But full implementation of the Platform for Action has in many instances been hampered by the absence, or only partial integration of a gender perspective into budgetary decisions and policies, most particularly those including the needs and priorities of women.

Project Five-O applauds the efforts of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to facilitate the integration and financing of gender equality and women's empowerment through national development strategies, sector-wide approaches and other new aid modalities. But Project Five-O is worried that the shift in the way development assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors, which focuses more on sector -wide approaches and large programs, has resulted in limited funding for promoting gender equality and development in under-resourced areas such as agriculture, where women comprise a large segment of the workforce.

Project Five-O is very concerned about the limited commitments to the inclusion of a gender perspective and women's empowerment in development processes as described in the Final Declaration of the International Conference on Financing for Development (the Monterrey Consensus) and subsequent related international meetings. Although important progress for women has been made worldwide, the advances and opportunities offered by the broad range of economic, political, cultural and social changes known as globalization have not, to a significant

extent, benefited women who continue to live in disadvantaged conditions that limit the free exercise of their rights and their capacity for development. There is an urgent need for implementation of concrete measures to address these conditions and guarantee women's development.

We therefore support a strengthening of the conceptual, operational and financial aspects of the Monterrey Consensus commitment to gender equality. We also maintain that in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements relating to development, including CSW 52 and Doha 2008, it is important to encourage the participation of civil society organizations with national and international agencies. Such participation will ensure the integration of the principles and actions of internationally agreed instruments in women's empowerment and financing for development (Beijing, Cairo conferences), as well as ensure that progress on the implementation of these principles and actions is closely monitored from a gender perspective.

Project Five-O endorses the recommendations of UN-INSTRAW to promote collaboration among governments, international financial institutions and civil society organizations to ensure that gender becomes a cross-cutting theme in both formulation and follow-up to financing for development policies. Research involving collection and distribution of data on the impact of macroeconomic policies, and analysis of the inter-connection between factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, economic status, schooling and place of residency, should be funded. Additionally, the production of gender statistics on the impact of specific economic policies, such as trade agreements, public spending and debt servicing, needs to be undertaken. UN-INSTRAW further proposes trainings for governments, civil society organizations and businesses to mainstream gender into the political and economic agenda, to develop gender diagnostics and methodologies for analysis, to follow up the implementation of economic policies, to assess their impact on women, as well as to develop advocacy tools.

Project Five-O organizations would like to emphasize the critical contribution that enhanced capacity building for women's leadership and participation in decision-making in financial activities must assume. An important measure of a country's growth and development must be the role and status of women. Opportunities for women in economic development are not infrequently held back by gender inequities. Women are, in many instances, an untapped economic resource and under-utilized economic asset that need to be nurtured to build stronger societies.

Project Five-O eagerly anticipates CSW 52 as an opportunity to strengthen our understanding of the complex economic and financial components which need to be further addressed to ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality are core to the formulation of and follow-up to all future financing for development policies and strategies.

Project Five-O also eagerly anticipates the discussions around the review theme for the 2008 CSW, "Women's participation in conflict prevention, management, conflict resolution and post-conflict peace-building". As recognized in Security Council resolution #1325 women must play a central role in each of these processes for peace to succeed. The review of progress made, obstacles encountered, and promising practices toward fulfilling commitments made in these areas are of the utmost importance to the achievement of women's rights and gender equality.