

## **Gender Stereotyping: A Priority Issue in the Campaign to Eliminate Gender-based Violence against Women**

**Panel: Gender Stereotypes – Gender Violence, 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Church Centre, New York, 8 March 2013**

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It is just over twenty years ago that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recognised the connection between gender stereotyping and violence against women in its celebrated *General Recommendation No. 19*. “Traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles,” it said, “perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion.”<sup>1</sup> With these few yet powerful words, the Committee catapulted the issue of gender stereotyping onto the international human rights stage.

Stereotyping is now widely recognised as a root cause and consequence of gender-based violence against women. And it is widely accepted that states are required to adopt all appropriate measures to eliminate gender stereotyping that violates the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women.

Yet, gender stereotyping remains a significant barrier to the elimination of gender-based violence against women. Moreover, surprisingly little is known about the stereotypes that foster and excuse gender-based violence against women and the obligations of states to address harmful stereotypes and the practice of wrongful gender stereotyping.

Prioritising gender stereotyping will be essential to our efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

We need to identify which stereotypes foster and excuse gender-based violence. We need to examine how those stereotypes are perpetuated and how they allow violence to occur. We need to improve understanding of the content and meaning of states’ obligations to address harmful stereotypes and the practice of wrongful gender stereotyping. And, perhaps, most importantly, we need to ensure that states approach stereotyping with the same seriousness and commitment with which they approach other issues.

We are confident that this panel will make an important contribution to debates on stereotyping and violence and, more broadly, to the priority theme of the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women – the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. In closing, we’d like to congratulate Lois Herman and Stephanie Ortoleva for recognising the importance of addressing gender stereotyping and their leadership in organising this panel.

Thank you

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation No. 19: Violence against Women*, UN Doc. A/47/38 at 1 (1993), para. 11.