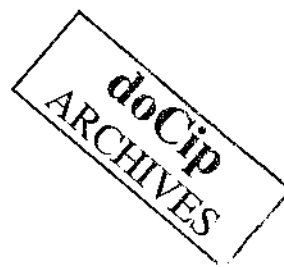


UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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DIVISION FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT
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Speech
to the
High-Level Panel of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
on the Theme of the Third Session
-- "Indigenous Women" --
by
Mr. Henrik-Ole Magga
Chairperson

Distinguished Members, Members States, Indigenous representatives and United Nations system representatives:

1. This year the theme of the Third Session is "Indigenous Women" – as wives, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers – I salute you – your courage – your strength – standing strong in a landscape of risk. My message to you is "you to not stand alone" – for indigenous men and boys stand with you – at your side.
2. Indigenous women live at the inter-sectionality of race and gender discrimination – indeed the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban in 2001, heard first hand of scarred and impoverished lives – as indigenous women - struggle to survive under multiple forms of discrimination.
3. Discrimination is a terrible thing – consider it – if you will - as an onion – when you investigate it – and peel away the layers – there are more layers beneath – and so is the lived experience of indigenous women and girls. Discrimination diminishes both the victim and the perpetrator. It is the anti-thesis of human potential. And where it thrives - all of us are impoverished and denied both our full individual and group potential.
4. Paragraph 18 of the Durban Declaration: *Requested States to adopt public policies and give impetus to programmes on behalf of and in concert with indigenous women and girls, with*

a view to promoting their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; to putting an end to their situation of disadvantage for reasons of gender and ethnicity; to dealing with urgent problems affecting them in regard to education, their physical and mental health, economic life and in the matter of violence against them, including domestic violence; and to eliminating the situation of aggravated discrimination suffered by indigenous women and girls on multiple grounds of racism and gender discrimination.

and

Paragraph 50. Urged States to incorporate a gender perspective in all programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and to consider the burden of such discrimination which falls particularly on indigenous women, African women, Asian women, women of African descent, women of Asian descent, women migrants and women from other disadvantaged groups, ensuring their access to the resources of production on an equal footing with men, as a means of promoting their participation in the economic and productive development of their communities;[emphasis added]

They are worthy recommendations that should be recalled in the recommendations that we make here, today.

5. However, I want to address you specifically about the role of boys and men in achieving gender equality. So often it seems to me that an important role of indigenous peoples in the global debates of our times is to remind us all of what may have been forgotten. Indigenous cultures rely on gender complementarity – a symbiosis, which values both women’s business and men business - a complementarity that ensures both mutual respect and balance.

6. I am a firm believer in the agreed conclusions of the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women – “*men must take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality*”. And that is what I want to speak to you about today.

7. In response to the growing issues of domestic violence and violence against women and children in our communities, indigenous peoples are searching for our own solutions. Indigenous community organizations in many parts of the world have established programmes for men and boys to complement the work of women’s organizations. Such programmes viewed as good practices include “indigenous men’s anti-violence projects”; “men’s groups and corporations to address domestic violence”; youth programmes for boys, which promote cultural education and values; peer counselling programmes, information campaigns and training programmes. These good practices need to be publicized and promoted. Above all they need to be resourced.

8. Increasingly, indigenous men are recognizing the important role we need to play in maintaining cultural values such as respect for women and girls. We must recognize the capacity in all of us to bring changes in attitudes, relationships and access to resources and decision-making, which are critical for the promotion of gender equality and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women.

9. The revolution of gender equality will only ever be won with the support of men and boys, which makes this by definition an important issue. The question of roles of men and boys is often conceptualised in terms of their moving over to let women share their dominance. This involves some assumptions that need to be questioned. The first is that women want to become 'men' i.e. share the world in current male terms; the second is that men should share the female roles, as currently prescribed. Both these standpoints limit the debate to a role based/role swapping model and could account for the limited enthusiasms for the framing of such a limited debate. It also extends the dichotomy of woman as victim, man as victor, which leads to some male groups pushing their claims for male victim-hood. What may be a more fertile approach to this issue is to start talking about removing gender stereotypes from the discussions of workplaces, communities and households and explore ways of redefining tasks and roles in ways, which move outside the gender dichotomy.

10. Work in this area needs to recognised that men, albeit often to their advantage, are also stereotypes and many have the potential for gains from working together on changing these. Women's groups are sometimes blamed for the woes of men by men, and that can make us wary of their involvement in gender issues. So strategies need to work on how to activate men to work on their issues and on joint issues in ways which can be collaborative.

11. Predominantly male parliaments could address the issues that hold women back, both as women but also as people from various backgrounds. Issues such as the:

- affordability of childcare and the low pay of childcare workers;
- restricted access to paid maternity or paternity leave;
- absence of women at high levels in the establishment;
- poor health outcomes of Indigenous people;
- insisting on properly gender disaggregated data cross-tabbed by other target groups so that we have a clear picture on where indigenous women stand;
- recognizing the specialist skills of the women's sector and acknowledging that we often are the best placed to provide women with the confidence and skills to take on active decision making roles.

12. Predominantly male boards of directors and CEOs could address the issues that hold women back, both as women but also as people from various backgrounds. Issues such as the:

- low levels of representation of women, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Indigenous people on boards and in senior management;
- family friendly employment issues that are more than just flexibility practices that make it easier for management and include actively rewarding women and men who take advantage of family friendly measures;
- addressing the growth in casualised and precarious employment;
- addressing the growing gender wage gap.

13. Predominantly male decision makers wherever they are could recognise that working

towards gender equality means more than announcing that you've undertaken gender mainstreaming and then never doing anything more. Gender mainstreaming still requires that you:

“assess[ing] the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and 3. evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated”³

and implicit in this is that you fund the research, programmes and advocacy that underpin knowing what the different implications for women and men are and how they can best be addressed.

How can we engage more indigenous men in activities to achieve gender equality?

14. a) By reminding people that gender does not just mean women. Gender is relational and places burdens and benefits on both sexes and that work to break down biologically determinist and social stereotypes of the roles of various genders will free all people to be the best human beings that they can be, reflecting their own strengths and interests.

b) Governments should also play a role in ensuring that gender mainstreaming has been properly implemented within their own practices and policies. For example tenders should ensure that they ask organizations tendering to identify how they will acknowledge gender differences within their work.

c) Pressure to remove all references to gender or the abolition of women's policy machinery should be resisted as should the dismantling of special programme for vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples.

d) In order to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change Government can also implement structural changes that encourage men to adopt more equitable ways of living with women. For example, Government can provide paid parental leave, and can implement or endorse workplace reforms designed to encourage men to make use of family friendly policies. Recognising that gender inequalities are connected to inequalities of class, ethnicity and sexuality, Government should work to address intersecting inequalities between men as well as between men and women, from a community development perspective in local communities.

e). Men and women have a stronger sense of ownership of outcomes if they are involved together in design, planning, implementation and management of development activities. The process of working together and of coming to agreement on various issues at field and NGO level itself is a learning process enabling men and women to test out new ways of relating to each other. Women-only projects are generally successful in raising women's skills and knowledge, levels of articulation and advocacy, but unless they impact on formal and informal leadership in the community, the gains are not sustainable. In most cases, engaging men and boys in the community

on secondary activities enable women and men to trial new roles and behaviours and to reflect and learn from the responses.

f) Traditionally, indigenous women had strategies that allowed them safe areas and spaces, such as the Australian Aboriginal peoples who maintained separate women's and men's camps. Women still need separate women-only programs and spaces to reflect on their experience and learn new skills and to acquire the behaviour skills for initiating positive, assertive and confident relationships with men and boys. All development programs need to incorporate both women-only and joint men and women activities as necessary components for development programs.

g) There is need to address men and men's behaviour directly as perpetrators of violence and discrimination against women. It is imperative to encourage positive male role models in the community to lead discussion on increasing gender-sensitive work and breaking down gender inequality.

h) A debate should be had and is welcomed that recognises occasions on which stereotypes of men are prejudicial to the development of boys and men, as it may add impetus to men's commitment to act in their own best interest. We should resist attempts to construct this debate as women and girls taking from men and boys.

15. Other useful Recommendations could include:

- Education and awareness raising;
- Legislation can influence attitudinal and behavioural change e.g. the inclusion of parents rooms in public spaces supports men who are taking care of young children.
- Media accountability/guidelines regarding the depiction of violence.

What can men do?

- Violence against women - men are the main perpetrators, mainly towards women they know - how can men teach men how to manage/control their anger/frustration without taking it out on the women in their lives, i.e.: a greater focus on prevention targeted at the perpetrators of crime.
- Communication strategies for the engagement of men and boys
- Bullying in schools & workplaces: working on instilling respectful attitudes, especially to reduce harassment of girls/women and men perceived to be homosexual
- Parenting
- Addressing stereotyping: It appears that society is changing at a much faster rate than people's ability to adapt to change. Only when society starts accepting people for their ability rather than their gender, culture, sexuality or age will we live as equals.
- To ensure that the common goals for the equality for women eg. Pay, positions in decision-making, supporting care givers, are not marginalised as women are still not equal in these and many other areas of civic and political life.

In finishing I ask indigenous men to accept the challenge to work in partnership with indigenous women for we must recognise that if we do not all advance together – we do not advance at all.