

## **Commission on the Status of Women**

### **Presidents Letter**

2014 St. Bonaventure University Model United Nations Conference

Hello Delegates,

My name is Jenna Maxwell and I will be your chair for the Commission on the Status of Women. I am currently a Freshman Political Science major at St. Bonaventure University. I am also a Senator for the Freshman Class in the Student Government Association. For this conference, I expect all of you to do the required research, present your countries' position to the best of your ability, as well as be sure to know the rules and procedure. I want this committee to have fun, learn from each other and enjoy our time together because that's what this is all about. I look forward to seeing all of you at our conference this spring!

### **THE TOPICS**

#### **Challenges in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls**

In 2000, members of the United Nations signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration which aimed at accomplishing various objectives such as reducing extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, improving maternal health, and empowering women. These goals came to be known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the timeline for completion by 2015. While we have come a very long way since 2000, many objectives- including those related to the rights of women and girls - still have a long way to go.

The gender gap in employment in 2012 still showed a 25% difference between employed men and women in the world as a whole. This gap is much larger when looking at African nations along with Western and Southern Asia (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum>).

Employment is just one of the eight areas the MDGs focused on as it relates to women and girls. There are very few nations that have met or are coming close to meeting the 2015 deadline for implementation of these goals. The UN has many projects to help bring these goals closer to completion, but much still can be done. Goal 2, which aims at achieving universal primary education for all children, is another place where work can be done; it should be mentioned that girls are still more likely to not be enrolled in primary school than boys. This commission has made strides to improve access to schools through the Safe City Initiative.

**Questions to consider:**

1. Are there ways to increase the efficiency of current UN programs in order to help all nations come close to meeting MDGs?
2. What is your country's position on those issues?
3. What is the status of equality in your country?
4. What is your country's policies regarding issues of equality?

**Additional Resources:**

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/>

**Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls**

This is an issue that can be viewed in many different ways and is something that must be pressed upon every nation to try to achieve. Many people believe that women and girls are simply inferior and weak objects that could be easily manipulated and abused. According to a study done by *The International Planned Parenthood Federation*, "Violence affects 1 in 3 women globally and is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights worldwide. It is a leading cause of death and disability among women. Globally, almost 50% of all sexual assaults are against girls 15 years old or younger.

Violence against women and girls impoverishes individual women and their families, drains public resources and lowers economic productivity”

<http://www.ippf.org/western-hemisphere/resources/publications/CSW-2013->

These figures are sure to be much higher in a country such as Syria that is going through bloody and protracted civil war. The situation is made much worse with the rise of ultra-radical and fanatical groups such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq, where according to UN officials “barbaric sexual assaults and savage rapes” have been reported. A striking example of this kind of violence can be seen in the case of Malala (who recently won the Nobel Peace Prize), the young female teenage activist from Pakistan who was brutally attacked and had her family threatened by extremists simply for speaking out for women’s rights in Pakistan. The attack was condemned worldwide and has made Malala a major spokeswoman for women’s rights in the Middle East and in the world.

Sexual and physical violence as tools of warfare are becoming more prevalent in unstable regions of Africa and the Middle East, but it is not the only form of violence that women and girls can be exposed to. Other forms that are prevalent in these regions especially are female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced child marriages. These are very pressing issues, some of which are rooted in very old religious, cultural and tribal tradition making them difficult to change immediately. Proper education, better medical facilities and working towards a stable and practical rule of law can help bring an end to some of these issues. As an international community we have the responsibility to protect women from harm and to treat them with equality and respect.

**Questions to consider:**

1. What steps has your country taken to ensure the decrease and elimination of targeted violence against women and girls?

2. How does your country rank in terms of violence against women and girls?
3. What international organizations have your country joined in order to help achieve eliminating violence against women?
4. What mechanisms - legal, social, or otherwise - does your country have in place to both protect women and girls and to penalize those who use targeted violence against them?

**Additional Resources:**

[http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48477#.U\\_1M300wJgs](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48477#.U_1M300wJgs)

<http://www.evawintl.org/> (End Violence Against Women International)

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/rapeweaponwar.aspx>

<http://www.icrw.org/what-we-do/adolescents/child-marriage>

<http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>

[http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf) (Statistics on domestic violence in the United States)

**Access of Women and Girls to Education, Training, Science and Technology and Full Employment**

In order for any society to advance, it needs to work hard to achieve gender equality. Currently, women and girls have fewer opportunities to receive the education and training they need to be able to succeed alongside men in the workplace. In the United States women earn \$0.77 to every dollar a male makes; in the European Union women earn €0.86 to every euro a male earns. Korea has the highest wage gap in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) at 37%. Therefore, unequal pay for women is not just limited to underdeveloped or poor nations.

Globally, in 37 of the 39 countries in the OECD, women actually hold higher graduation rates from secondary schools or universities than men do. However most of the fields women earn degrees in

remain the traditionally 'female' jobs such as health and welfare and the humanities and arts. When it comes to sciences, women make up only 40% of the population.

(<http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/09/female-graduation-rates>)

While women are making strides in education, they still suffer when it comes to finding full employment and equal pay.

**Questions to consider:**

1. How are women and girls discriminated against in regards to education and workplace opportunities in general and in your country?
2. What important programs have been established to help close the education gap, and how successful and efficient were they?
3. Why is gender equality important in education and how does that affect society as a whole?

**Additional Resources:**

<http://www.businessinsider.com/tuition-costs-by-country-college-higher-education-2012-6?op=1>

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/09/female-graduation-rates>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum#MDG2>

[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/agreed\\_conclusions/AC\\_CSW55\\_E.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/agreed_conclusions/AC_CSW55_E.pdf)

<http://www.prb.org/> (Population Reference Bureau)

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105->

[1299699968583/7786210-](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-)

[1315936222006/chapter-5.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1315936222006/chapter-5.pdf)