



## Economic and Social Council

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

#### **Fifty-eighth session**

10-21 March 2014

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women  
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace  
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic  
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and  
further actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by Pathways to Peace, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## **Statement**

### **Need for a United Nations global conference on women**

A United Nations global women's conference would accelerate empowerment and equality for women and girls. Without equality, peace is unattainable. Without peace, sustainability and development falters. The Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations declarations and resolutions about human rights for women will not be achieved until violence towards women and children is morally and spiritually unacceptable with legal consequences and until Governments and leaders are responsible for their agreements.

Women need to become activists on their own behalf; otherwise women are sidelined, subordinated to men's needs or the priorities of institutions or political parties. Those were the conclusions of the 2012 study on violence against women by the American Political Science Review. The study concluded that only strong feminist movements are able to voice and organize around their top priorities as women. A United Nations global conference on women would bring together women and organizations concerned with women and children to lead, inspire and facilitate progress for women and girls. We urge the inclusion of women who are active in civil, environmental, religious, meditative and spiritual organizations.

In their joint statement made in 2012 on International Women's Day, the Secretary-General and the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly proposed the convening of a global conference on women in 2015, 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women. They urged Member States who have the authority to convene the proposed conferences to take the necessary steps.

The request has not been withdrawn nor has it been taken up and supported. We urge the current General Assembly to act on this. Once a resolution is passed, the Secretariat and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) would have responsibilities to implement it. A global women's conference would create awareness of UN-Women, become a cause to support financially, allow women across class, race, religious and national boundaries to network, and be a foundation for equality and the empowerment of women.

A world that is safe for children will not breed terrorists in homes or in countries; a world that is safe for women is a world where children are safe. For this to come about, the feminine principle expressed in circles and the masculine principle of hierarchy must come into balance, otherwise the acquisition of power over others prevails and no one can be safe.

### **Psychology of power over others: the dominator model**

When power over others is the model in families and societies, female children are not important and male children are taught to dominate others or be dominated; they learn that one is either a strong winner or a weak loser and that practising dominance through ridicule, physical means, intimidation or acquisitions means you are respected. This is how patriarchy socializes its boys and men. Boys who are unprotected from being bullied fantasize about getting even. They can grow into men who do to others what was done to them (identifying with the aggressor). They

can seek revenge as a group to counteract feelings of helplessness, lack of worth and humiliation of others like themselves. Women are defined by their relationship to men and are the means through which men humiliate other men by raping their women.

In order to achieve an antidote to this dominator model, differences between masculine and feminine genders, values and principles would need to become complementary, rather than superior-inferior. The empowerment and equality of women in all dimensions of life are the means through which this can be accomplished.

### **The millionth circle: critical mass/tipping point**

In her various publications, Dr. Jean Shinoda Bolen described how major social change comes about once a critical mass is reached, when that which was resisted or considered unthinkable becomes the new norm; such as recently happened in the United States of America with the sudden acceptance of same-sex marriages, or as happened in 1920, when American women finally got the right to vote after a 70-year effort.

Two mechanisms related to critical mass explain how cultural change can come about through a proliferation of women's circles. Rupert Sheldrake, a biologist, describes how a new attitude or behaviour becomes normal once a critical number of a species adopts it. In Sheldrake's theory, as the millionth circle movement grows through the formation of new circles, it will draw upon the energy or patterns of similar present or past circle movements.

Malcolm Gladwell's model of how an idea can spread and take hold is based on epidemics. The name given to that one dramatic moment in an epidemic when everything appears to change all at once is the "tipping point", or the moment of critical mass. His thesis is that social epidemics behave similarly with the appearance of sudden change and that, like its disease equivalent, it takes a small percentage of the population to bring it about. Epidemics depend upon the people who transmit infectious agents, the infectious agent itself and the environment. Social epidemics work in the same way; what matters is who spreads the idea, that the idea takes hold and the receptivity of the environment or context.

In order for there to be a millionth circle tipping point, the idea has to be spread by three types of people: those who are enthusiastic and energetic, widely known and held in high regard by their peers; others whose knowledge is valued and who pass on information about the millionth circle with the sole purpose of wanting to help others; and others who sell the idea and overcome resistance. All types need to believe that change and transformation is possible through circles and want to make a difference through what they are doing to further the goal of reaching a critical mass. These are the kinds of women who would be attending a global women's conference and would return home to spread what they learned and now advocated.

It has been predominantly women who have grasped the idea of the millionth circle. While the feminine principle is potentially present in the psyches of both women and men, women have a gender and cultural advantage. Women use conversation to build up trust and similarities. Men, by contrast, use conversation to determine hierarchy. Circles support the discovery of mutually acceptable solutions.

In its resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Security Council recognized the need for women to be involved at all levels of conflict resolution. However, that is not always followed in practice. In order to be truly effective, women need to have equality and be empowered at peace tables.

Holding a United Nations global women's conference would be a major step towards the equality and empowerment of women and girls. It would be a means to energize a global women's movement through raising consciousness, seeding circles to reach the millionth circle, creating affiliations and communicating through technology and the Internet that were not available at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The request by the Secretary-General for a United Nations global women's conference has not been withdrawn. We urge the Commission on the Status of Women to recommend this as a step toward a Fifth World Conference on Women, two decades after the Fourth. We urge Member States to initiate, support and reach consensus to hold this conference within three years.

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