

## **PACIFIC WOMEN'S WATCH (NEW ZEALAND) Inc.**

An organisation in special consultative status with ECOSOC

### **KEY CONCERNS IN IMPLEMENTING CEDAW – ORAL STATEMENT**

Madam Chair, Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) is an organisation representing 18 groups and New Zealand women across a diversity of cultures, many of whom suffer discrimination and marginalisation. We are most concerned to report that many of the Committee's recommendations following the New Zealand Government review in 2007 have not yet been acted upon. Further we consider that there has been some areas **of retrogression** regarding the achievement of equality for women.

We bring four key concerns that we wish to highlight:

#### **1. No action plan for New Zealand women**

We are disappointed and extremely concerned that there is currently no Action Plan for New Zealand Women, nor is one deemed necessary. The previous five year plan ended in 2009. A new plan is not contemplated. We believe progress for gender equality for New Zealand women will be best achieved through a new five-year Action Plan which is time bound and establishes benchmarks for the achievement of goals together with the monitoring and reporting of measurable outcomes. We recommend that the State Party be urged to lead the development of a new Action Plan as a priority. We are also disappointed to report that the State Party has not implemented the Committee's recommendation that gender impact statements for all policy papers are submitted to cabinet and all cabinet committees. We consider there has been retrogression in regards to mainstreaming gender perspectives in national plans, institutions and in legislation. Changes in social services funding for NGOs has resulted in the loss of specialist services for women. Funding is ad hoc and not tied to strategies or an action plan.

#### **2. Lack of legislative review of forced and underage marriage**

A Pacific Women's Watch petition to parliament in November 2009 asked the State Party to take steps to review legislation to increase protection for those at risk of forced and underage marriage. This is a very real issue, generally clandestine in nature. The mental health of young migrant and refugees girls and young women is being severely compromised leading in some cases to self-harm and suicide. The State Party believes that new legislation is unlikely to have an impact but is, nevertheless, considering a review. As yet no time-frame has been set for this review. It is time for urgency.

#### **3. Welfare reform influencing women's reproductive choices**

The State Party has introduced reforms of welfare which will result in punitive sanctions for women who do not, or cannot control their fertility while in receipt of welfare. We request the Committee to recommend that the State Party remove sanctions on women who have subsequent children while on welfare. We also highlight our concerns about the State Party's policy of specifically targeting women on welfare, and the female dependents of welfare recipients, to use Long Acting Reversible Contraception. We do not consider that women's

contraceptive choices should not be influenced by welfare policy. Further we consider that the State Party's interest in influencing the fertility of particular groups of women is discriminatory. Indigenous women (Maori) remain over- represented as recipients of welfare meaning these policies affect them disproportionately.

**4. The need to adopt the recommendations of the transgender inquiry**

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission's Transgender Inquiry identified high levels of discrimination and violence experienced by transgender people. There are also major gaps in the availability and quality of health services for transgender people. Transgender people are often treated without dignity or respect when accessing health services. We ask that the recommendations of the transgender inquiry be adopted.

**Thank you**