



**Statement by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), an
ECOSOC NGO**

**Delivered at the Panel on Integrating a Gender Perspective in the work of the
Council and its Special Procedures**

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Madam High Commissioner, distinguished delegates and panellists, I want to thank and congratulate everyone involved in organizing this important panel, which is of great relevance and interest to the network of Southern feminist scholars and activists called Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. For the last two decades, DAWN has been engaged in generating a Southern feminist perspective on the global political and policy environment. Our aim in the Human Rights Council is to contribute to expanding the policy space for incorporating gender perspectives into the diverse and interrelated human development and human rights themes.

Let me begin by saying that we are encouraged by the efforts to integrate a gender perspective in select areas of the Special Procedures, particularly in their reports to the Council and in the methodologies used for their country visits. But much more remains to be done. We need to explore new ways through which mandate holders and the Special Procedures system as a whole can improve their work by more consistently illuminating the negative effects of unequal gender power relations on the fulfilment of human rights for all. Two ways in which this can be tackled are:

First, the Special Procedures system needs to strengthen local to global connections in an effort to bridge global discourses and local realities. This panel can recognize the crucial role that the Special Procedures plays by bringing human rights abuses experienced at local levels to the attention of the Council, and by raising awareness of local actors about the debates taking place in global arenas. As we all know women play a major role in local processes, as a group subjected to various circumstances of vulnerability, but also as active agents advocating for change in the social, legal and policy environments where they are situated.

Second, the Special Procedures system needs to more systematically integrate a gender perspective and examine the interconnections across various human rights areas. The reports presented to this Council over the past year reveal a number of gaps and inadequacies that I would like to elaborate on. While some reports mention “women” several times, other reports make a one-time token reference to the categories of “women” and/or “gender” even when the subject addressed clearly demands an in-depth gender analysis. Most troubling are those reports that totally dismiss gender inequalities and how these contribute to or exacerbate other human rights violations. Furthermore, the reports adopt a rather simplistic and binary concept of gender that does not take into account for instance that transgender and intersex persons – or in

specific cultural contexts, hijras, kothis, metis and other forms of gender expression – are also victims of human rights violations.

The lack of interconnections across human rights areas can be seen in the Human Rights Council mandates that review the situation of human rights in relation to economic and financial trends but that never adopt a gender perspective. None of the reports recently presented to the Council on the effects of economic reform policies and foreign debt or transnational corporations appreciate the value of the categories of “gender” or “women” in examining the social dynamics of these issues. This is in stark contrast to the ongoing review process of the UN Financing for Development Conference, where the NGO Women’s Working Group, in which DAWN participates, has systematically underlined the impact of unequal gender power relations in areas such as domestic resource mobilization, foreign direct investments and private capital flows, trade, international financial and technical cooperation, and debt.

Other areas of the Council, in which DAWN is engaged, that demand gender analyses include special mandates on critical ecological concerns such as toxic and dangerous products and wastes; the right to food; access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The Council can effectively contribute toward illuminating the linkages between the devastating health and livelihood effects of environmental degradation, the increasing impoverishment of women, and human rights violations worldwide.

The Special Procedures system and the Council itself clearly needs to follow through on its commitment to more fully embrace gendered analyses in every aspect of its work and recognize that women, as with other persons and groups affected, are not mere victims but also full subjects and agents of change in the struggle for human rights.

Let me close on an affirmative note by expressing our appreciation for the gender sensitive men participating in this panel, because their presence is a proof that the struggle for gender justice and equality is everyone’s responsibility, not only of women or the many others whose lives are detrimentally affected by culturally and socially constructed unequal gender power relations that continue to prevail in our societies.

Thank you.