

“Addressing violence against women through legal reform”
The Joint Dialogue of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
4 March 2009, Conference Room 2, United Nations Headquarters New York

An Associate of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy (ICCLR), Eileen Skinnider, was invited by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW) to present on the ongoing work of the review and update of the Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

During the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women meetings in New York, a Joint Dialogue of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was organized on “addressing violence against women through legal reform”. The Panel discussion was held March 4th, 2009 at the United Nations Headquarters.

The dialogue provided an opportunity for the two Commissions to enhance collaboration in their work on violence against women. Co-chaired by the Chairpersons of the two Commission, H.E. Olivier Belle and H.E. K.L. Ekedede, opening comments were provided by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro.

Representatives from Member States, entities of the UN system and non-governmental organizations then heard presentations focusing on developments and initiatives in the area of legislative reform on violence against women. The panel was as follows:

- Ms. Imrana Jalal, Human Rights Advisor, Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team, who focused on addressing violence against women through legislation, based on the model framework for legislation developed by the Expert Group Meeting of UNDAW and UNODC in May 2008.
- Ms. Eileen Skinnider, Associate, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, who focused on the review and update to the 1997 Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.
- Mr. Mohamed Mattar, Executive Director of the Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University, spoke on promising practices in legislation on trafficking in human beings.
- Ms. Eva Biaudet, OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, spoke on the developments in legislation on trafficking in human beings in the OSCE region.
- Ms. Clara Sommarin, Child Protection Specialist, Exploitation and Violence, UNICEF, focused on the use of legislation and legislative models to address violence against the girl child.

The presenters identified promising practices and lessons learned, as well as highlighted gaps and challenges in this area.

By way of background, the General Assembly resolution 61/143 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women calls on the entire UN system to review their respective mandates with regards to enhancing their response to violence against women. In April 2008, the Crime Commission adopted Decision 17/1 to review and update the 1997 Model Strategies and Practical Measures in the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

The 1997 Model Strategies, adopted by the General Assembly, are meant to be used as guidelines by governments and other entities in their efforts to address, within the criminal justice system, the various manifestations of violence against women. They provide a comprehensive set of criminal justice strategies and measures which can assist policy makers, criminal justice and law enforcement professionals and other concerned groups in better addressing the needs of women and ensure their fair treatment in the justice system. While, of course, as the title suggests, the focus is on crime prevention and criminal justice, the Model Strategies recognizes the need to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to combat violence against women. They are divided into 11 sections, dealing with (1) criminal law, (2) criminal procedure, (3) police, (4) sentencing and corrections, (5) victim support and assistance, (6) health and social services, (7) training, (8) research and evaluation, (9) crime prevention measures, (10) international cooperation and (11) follow-up activities. [A Resource Manual and a Compendium of Best Practices](http://www.icclr.law.ubc.ca/Site%20Map/Publications%20Page/Elimination.htm) [link to <http://www.icclr.law.ubc.ca/Site%20Map/Publications%20Page/Elimination.htm>]. were also developed to assist governments in their implementation of these strategies in 1998.

The Decision 17/1 calls on UNODC to convene an intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting to review and update, as appropriate the Model Strategies. This Meeting is scheduled to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, March 23-26, 2009. The group’s recommendations will be presented back to the Crime Commission in 2010.