

**Joint Statement of the Provincial Girl Delegates at the
51st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women,
to the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council
UNHQ, New York, 23 February – 4 March 2007**

Introduction

We are a group of girl delegates aged 13 to 18 from around the world, including the United States, Australia, Hong Kong, India and Kenya who have been invited to participate in UNCSW51. It is a pity that we did not get the chance to meet our sister from Burundi due to her visa problem. We have been exposed to a lot of issues that concern the girl child and have been introduced to many of our fellow girl delegates. This is the first time ever in history that people under the age of 18 participated in any of the United Nations meetings. It is also the first time ever that the ECOSOC Chambers was opened for the discussion of women's issues.

Issues that concern the Girl Child

In studying "all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child", we learnt about:

- child trafficking which is often connected to sexual exploitation, prostitution and pornography;
- gender inequality in education and job opportunity;
- that more than 60% of 15 to 25 year-olds living with HIV/Aids are female;
- that girls suffer from violence in regions of armed conflict; and
- that the media portrays a gender bias that undermines girls' and womens' empowerment.

Key-learning and Enlightenment

Apart from making new friends from different countries, the participation has very much widened our perspectives. Our key-learning throughout these two weeks include (1) that *education* liberates women for them to understand their rights in regard to their *bodies* (dispensing Female Genital Mutilation), their *voices* (the right to speak out and be heard) and their *opportunities* (in education and career and *decision-making*) and (2) that *poverty* and lack of *knowledge* go hand in hand with each other and often they form a vicious cycle. We also see that together, we can make a difference and build a better world together.

Suggestions on the Church's response from the girls' perspective

We thank the Church and our chaperones for bringing us here together and their hospitality throughout. We are aware that the church lives in the community even at the village level. We believe that the church has the power to raise every community's awareness to the women's status by (i) providing networking and mentoring to girls, (ii) advocating and promoting the 13/31 Resolution, (iii) educating girls as well as boys on equal gender rights, and (iv) continuing to work with deprived women and children. While being touched ourselves, we wish that the Church may continue to touch the lives of the unfortunate ones in the world. We pray that with God's own pastoral love and His own healing hands, people everywhere will be filled with the strength, peace and joy in their life and have the power and courage to face whatever challenges that are encountered in fighting for equality, peace and justice, without doubt or fear.