



Oral STATEMENT
38th session of the Human Right Council

Item 3
Clustered ID
Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice

MMM congratulates the Working Group on discrimination against women for its excellent report. We fully agree that “there are indeed multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women that reinforce and sustain each other”.

However, we wish to invite the Working Group to consider motherhood and women’s role in so-called “social reproduction” as a common root cause of discrimination, and the “unfinished business of feminism”¹.

In the world of work, the systemic discrimination against mothers at hiring, promotion, and a gender pay gap that increases with the number of children has a name: “the motherhood penalty”.

The unequal distribution of care responsibilities, which in the case of developing countries is exacerbated by the lack of public infrastructure, remains the main structural barrier to gender equality. Everywhere, women continue to do the bulk of unpaid family care work, up to 10 times than men in certain countries. In addition to the discrimination linked to the lower value given to this work, the resulting time poverty is a major obstacle to their full participation in both the economic and political spheres.

To further progress on women’s rights and gender equality, the issue of unpaid care work must be seriously addressed.

1. Recognize that unpaid family care work IS work, that it is valuable and essential for sustaining society, and that it is everyone’s concern.
2. Develop public infrastructure and services that aim to reduce the time spent by families on household and care work.
3. Engage men in caregiving, beginning with paid paternity leave, shared parental leave and family-work reconciliations policies - for both women and men.

Valuing and Redistributing care between men and women in the family is crucial, and it also has added benefits: it fosters wellbeing and positive values instead of violence in the family – and positively impacts women, children and men themselves. It also has a role model effect, promoting gender equality and transforming gender roles stereotypes for the future generation.

¹ Expression coined by Andrea O’Reilly in Matricentric feminism, 2016