

Resolution 4

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES AS A VIOLATION OF THEIR HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Proposed by: Women Graduates – USA

Seconded by: the Indian Federation of University Women's Associations (IFUWA).

The 32nd GWI General Assembly resolves that:

- 1. National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to develop both legislation and educational programs for the elimination of all forms of public sexual harassment and to encourage full respect for women and girls;**
- 2. GWI and NFAs work together on raising global awareness of the issue of public sexual harassment of women and girls as a violation of their civil and human rights**
- 3. NFAs advocate that all governments address this issue; and**
- 4. NFAs support the expansion of *UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative* launched in 2010 to encourage innovative, locally owned and sustainable approaches to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women and girls in public spaces.**

Suggested Plan of Action:

1. NFAs should work with their respective governments to strengthen legal protections of women and girls in public spaces, train law enforcement to anticipate and act on incidents of public sexual harassment and improve criminal justice processes to punish offenders
2. GWI and NFAs should work together and with NGOs to create global awareness of the effects of public sexual harassment on women and girls, the socio-economic effects of these crimes within countries and the need for governments to reject policy decisions that would result in gender inequality and violence (including public sexual harassment) because it deters women's social and economic independence
3. NFAs should support the expansion of UN Women's Safe Cities Global initiative to as many major cities and urban areas as possible and educate city mayors, women's groups, municipal employees and community partners about the programme's tools, policies and approaches to the prevention of sexual harassment and violence.

Supporting Statement:

Sexual harassment and violence in public spaces are an everyday occurrence for women and girls around the world—in urban and rural areas, in developed and developing countries. Women and girls experience and fear various types of sexual violence in public spaces, from sexual harassment to sexual assault including rape and femicide. It occurs on streets, in public transport and parks, in and around schools and workplaces, in public sanitation facilities and water and food distribution sites, in social media and in their own neighbourhoods.

This ultimately reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to attend school or university and consequently their capacity to work in order to reap the rewards of economic empowerment. It has far-reaching effects on their mental and physical health which prevents them from participating fully in achieving their personal and professional development goals.

In many countries, public sexual harassment of women and girls is possibly the longest-standing and most neglected issue with practically no laws against it on the books.

Countries that consider public sexual harassment of women as a benign form of intrusion into girls' and women's lives neglect this serious issue at their peril. The public sexual harassment of women and girls is a public health issue, a law enforcement and criminal justice issue, and a civil rights and human rights issue.

Additionally, it is an economic issue. For some time, society has seen all violence against women as an economic issue; the UN, NGOs and women's groups have been advocating against international foreign policy and trade agreements that ignore human rights violations. They have put all parties to the agreements on notice regarding the need for direct relationships between profit and human rights in the achievement of a country's long-term economic success.

REFERENCES:

<http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/National-Street-Harassment-Report-November-29-20151.pdf>

http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20women-evaw-safecities-brief_us-web%20pdf.ashx

<http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20americas/documentos/publicaciones/monitoring%20gendereq%2014oct.pdf?v=1&d=20151015T095400>

http://www.svfreenyc.org/media/newsletter/issue_30.pdf