



Ottawa, January 12, 2010

Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations,
United Nations,,
New York, N.Y 10017

Re: Support to the *Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*

Mr. Secretary General,

The *Network of Femmes et Ministères* founded in Quebec in 1982 is a self governing group of Catholic women committed to the Christian Community and particularly preoccupied with the improvement of the condition of women in the Church. The official recognition of ministries exercised by Christian women is slow to come and the access to ordained ministry is always prohibited. However, the specificity of the Network does not exempt it from caring for women who, in a large number of countries, are victims of discrimination of all sorts.

Therefore, the Network of *Femmes et Ministères* considers important and necessary to reiterate the support of many Catholic Women for the *Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW/CEDEF)*, in spite of the fact that representatives of 25 countries of the *World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO/UMOFC)* voted not to support it. Its President, Mrs. Karen M. Hurley gave the reasons for this decision in a letter addressed to you in November 2009.

This organization (WUCWO) affirms that the *CEDAW* is "being used as a tool to promote violence against women and girls, mothers and babies". And yet, a careful rereading of articles in the document is far from confirming such assertion. On the contrary, they all argue in favour of taking "concrete actions in order to eradicate violence perpetrated upon women" as formulated in Mrs. Hurley's letter to the Secretary General. Yet, is discrimination not a violence made to the human dignity, a violence which includes in itself all others? The *Convention* finds here its *raison d'être*.

The position of the WUCWO gives to understand that the applications of the *CEDAW* are at the origin of the lack of respect for the values of some women and the beliefs of others. Is challenging the applications of the tool that would expose an "*ambiguous language*" hidden behind "topics such as gender, reproductive health, choice, or rights" implying, *de facto*, the necessity to question the very *raison d'être*, the value and the relevance of the *Convention*? Are not the *Bible* and the

Quran, which are considered as sacred books, subjected to the same fate, due to different interpretations? So many gestures of hostility are committed towards those, women or men, who do not share the same faith, sometimes reaching the levels of fratricidal wars! In spite of these overwhelming facts in history, still current, many believers, women or men, continue to draw from these sources, in order to bring to light the equal dignity of women and men.

No legislation, under any pretext, should tolerate a breach on this matter. Being the essence of human nature, the dignity of the person, woman and man, demands to be fully recognized and respected. In this regard, there is no requirement to support the idea of a specific dignity for women. So, it is imperative to strongly denounce the use of the concept of “dignity of woman” to justify discrimination based on sex.

It is this way of thinking that has prompted us to manifest officially our support for the *CEDAW*. This expression of solidarity voices two points: first, the existence of different viewpoints among the adherents of the catholic tradition and, secondly, the incentive to seek more inventive ways to ensure the *elimination of all forms of discrimination towards women*, as well as towards all human beings.

Yours respectfully,

Micheline Laguë, président

Micheline Laguë, President of *Réseau Femmes et Ministères*

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Support to the letter obtained from January 15th to January 26th, 2010:

- * *Association des Religieuses pour la Promotion des Femmes (ARPF)*, équipe de coordination nationale (Canada)
- * *Association des Religieuses pour la Promotion des Femmes de la région de Québec* (Canada)
- * *Association des Religieuses pour la Promotion des Femmes du Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean* (Canada)
- * *Association des Religieuses pour la Promotion des Femmes de l'Estrie* (Canada)
- * *Centre culturel chrétien* (Canada)
- * *Centre justice et foi* (Canada)
- * *Centre St-Pierre* (Canada).
- * *Droits et Libertés dans les Églises* (France)
- * *Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ)* (Canada)
- * *Femmes et Hommes en Église* (France)
- * *Forum André-Naud de Trois-Rivières* (Canada)
- * *Housetop Care Limited* (United Kingdom)
- * *Institut Notre-Dame du Bon-Conseil de Montréal* (Canada)
- * *La Collective L'autre Parole* (Canada)
- * *Les Amies de Madeleine Delbrél de l'Outaouais* (Canada)
- * *Réseau culture et foi* (Canada)
- * *Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW)* (United States)