

**6 March 2013**

**Norwegian breakfast input**

Thank you Ambassador, secretariat and honourable guests for the privilege of having us here this morning. It is also appropriate for me to express my gratitude on behalf of all of us whom FOKUS has sponsored to attend this very important session of the Commission on the Status of women.

This meeting has already proved to be a huge eye opener to me as I follow the discussions and debates that are the central theme of the conference. My experience of working on the issue of violence against women in my home country of South Africa, my work across African as president of Amanitare Sexual Rights network has given me a fairly good insight into the experiences of women in respect of violence against women and particularly into some of the root causes of such violence. My participation here has broadened my knowledge and deepened by understanding while also challenging me on some fronts and affirming the work that so many of us do.

Mr (or Madam) Ambassador Norway has always been a leading light in the fight for gender equality. Your country and its policies have provided much guidance, much inspiration and resources in the fight to end discrimination and the oppression of women. We have appreciated that. My organisation, Masimanyane Women's Support Centre received its very first international support from FOKUS and the Norwegian Crisis Shelter movement. We gained a greater analysis of domestic violence and rape through our engagement with these two amazing women's organisations. We have grown stronger as a result of their support. Their ability to contextualise women's oppression and to apply the principles of CEDAW to issues of inequality and particularly to the disparities that exist between men

and women in our society, has changed the lives of thousands of women in my country and in other countries in which they work.

It is somewhat disconcerting to listen to the discourse and the debates at this forum which are strongly pushing the view that violence against women will only be laminated with the inclusion of men and with their input into the struggle. We have always believed that male power supersedes the power that women have in our societies and while we fully acknowledge that we need to work with men to address these power imbalances, we see the empowerment of women essential to addressing these imbalances. Given the disparities that exist because of the power imbalances, this cannot be a zero sum struggle. The investment into developing women's agency has to be greater than that investment into addressing men and masculinities.

This acknowledgement was central to the struggle against violence against women in past global for a and many outcomes documents and consensus documents reflected that. My experience at this CSW is that we are conducting that struggle in retreat mode. We are backing away from hard fought concepts and language out of fear that many states will not support what we really want.

It is my hope that the government of Norway will continue its visionary leadership on gender equality and take this struggle to new heights which have the greatest potential to end discrimination against women generally and violence against women specifically and in so doing, contribute to the attainment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all the women of our global community.

Thank you.

Lesley Ann Foster