Position Paper for the Commission on the Status of Women

Of great importance to the Commission on the Status of Women at this meeting are: Evaluating The Effectiveness of Gender Mainstreaming in the Quest for Equality, Engaging Men and Boys in the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Advancing Empowerment: The Role of Women in Media and Communications. The People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria is highly active on a regional, as well as national, level to promote the equality and human rights of women, as it is a member of the Committee on Women and Development, a subcommittee of the UN Commission for Africa. Algeria believes that in order for true progress to be made in achieving the goals of the Beijing Declaration, the Platform for Action and other such documents, their implementation must ideally be turned over primarily to the state, which in turn may provide proper action on such issues in a way appropriate for the individual society.

I. Evaluating The Effectiveness of Gender Mainstreaming in the Quest for Equality

Algeria wholeheartedly supports the efforts that have been made by individual nations and the international community to support the rights of women through gender mainstreaming. We believe firmly in encouraging the equality of women, and have taken many steps since the Beijing Declaration to ensure changes are made. Among these steps, we have reorganized our government so that the position in charge of solidarity and the family has been elevated to a full Ministry, so that it is now the center for information and decisions regarding women’s and family affairs. This creates a more influential body to encourage gender mainstreaming in Algeria. Within Algeria, women are protected from discrimination and provided equality concerning education, employment, health and the judicial system; however, Algeria continues to strive to expand women’s equality and gender mainstreaming to other sectors of society. Algeria currently possesses a strong civil society whose goal it is to advocate for the human rights of women and girls. Specifically active in Algeria are a number of non-governmental organizations dedicated to this cause.

In addition to the changes in the structure of the Algerian government, the republic has introduced a Ministry of Women’s Affairs in 2003, which now promotes specific labor unions dedicated to promoting women in the workplace, such as the National Committee of Working Women. In addition to this change, Algeria has adopted many other programs to support women in the workforce. One such program offers micro-credits so that women who are unable to work for social and cultural reasons can obtain the means to work and meet the needs of their families. Programs such as this have provided women with the opportunity to reach upper level employment positions. In fact, women account
for over 50% of university staff, 60% of medical staff, more than 30% of judges and over 55% of journalists.

To ensure that such changes remain effective, Algeria held a workshop on women’s affairs in April of 1996, and established a national committee representing all relevant groups and political parties that is assigned to follow up and implement recommendations. In addition, Algeria established the National Population Committee, which is responsible for preserving and promoting the family, in which “the presence of women is considerable,” according to the Evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action from 7 December 1998. Much commendable work has been done in Algeria, and the country continues to work for equality through gender mainstreaming. The changes in the Algerian government and its practices have lead to extensive increases in the opportunities for women not just in employment, but across the socio-political spectrum. However, there is still considerable room for improvement. Changes like those made in Algeria need to become commonplace worldwide for governments to be able to effectively handle and promote gender mainstreaming.

II. Engaging Men and Boys in the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Algeria strongly believes that men and boys should be educated in ways to end discrimination against women because it is necessary for every society to solve its problems as a whole with a united front. However, Algeria also recognizes and stresses the need for general education improvements, because, as has been demonstrated in Algeria since the early 1970’s, it is with a general increase in education that a society as a whole becomes more modern and attuned to the rights not only of women, but of all minorities, and the cause for human rights in general. Algeria has worked in recent decades to create an educated and aware society. Furthermore, Algeria recently has begun to implement laws and practices aimed not only to increase women’s rights and the role of women, but also to give responsibility to men and boys to help eliminate discrimination. For example, there have been recent suggestions to the government that in the struggle to end discrimination against women, it is most important to end violence against women. Specifically, it has been suggested that husbands show consideration for their wives to guard her honor and dignity. Also, there have been recent restrictions on polygamy within Algeria. Algeria was most recently recognized in 2004 by the UN as a nation that has taken positive steps towards promoting human rights of women through positive revisions of its family code which defines the relationship between men and boys and women and girls within the context of the family. These revisions have strongly called for, and supported, a belief in family balance: the belief that everyone should share duties and responsibilities. Algeria strongly encourages the international community to support this family balance. We believe that initiatives to engage men and boys in the elimination of discrimination against women must be undertaken at the state level to fit each society’s unique demands and needs. Algeria also feels it is of the utmost importance of this international community to continue to support increased education for only an educated
and enlightened society can realize not only how men and boys are integral to ending women’s rights, but also the importance of human rights and equality for women in general.

III. Advancing Empowerment: The Role of Women in Media and Communications

Among all nations, Algeria sets an unprecedented standard for women in the media. First, within Algeria, according to Freedom House, more than 50 percent of print media employees are women. Many women are active as journalists writing columns ranging from politics to economics to social concerns. Also, women make up slightly less than 50 percent of all national radio station staff, and two thirds of all television news writers and reporters are women. As reported by the UN, Algeria has been making great strides in increasing not only the role of women in media, but also in politics. Elections in 2002, for example, showed a two fold increase in women members of parliament from 12 percent to 24 percent. Furthermore, 34 percent of all magistrates in the judiciary are women, and women have held roles of great power in general within the judiciary such as president. Overall, in Algeria, women are making remarkable strides politically.

In further relation to women in media, Algerian media also portrays a strong and positive image of women. Specifically, Algerian media does not support the photographic degradation of women and many Algerian movies focus on the many roles of women such as a mothers, wives, and daughters. Algerian media focuses on the women’s struggle for personal identity, which is supported by the greater Algerian society. Algeria firmly believes that it is just as necessary for the state to take an active role in disallowing the exploitation of women in the media as it is for the state to promote an active role for women in the media. To this extent, Algeria calls for further support of the Millennium Development Goals, the Platform for Action and the Gender Equality, Development and Peace in the Twenty-First Century document at the state level. We would strongly encourage other governments to pursue similar strategies as Algeria has in taking an active role in the media and promotion of positive images of women. As it is therefore imperative that state leaders recognize the importance of their actions, Algeria urges this committee to compile initiatives taken by Algeria and other nations to portray positive images of women in the media and define effective ways to eliminate negative images of women to create societal change.