

## The Loretto Women's Network Identity Statement

The Loretto Women's Network is a voluntary association of feminists in the larger Loretto Community. (The Loretto community is composed of Sisters of Loretto and Loretto Co-Members.) We are committed to act for the empowerment of women. We agree to work toward transforming institutional, personal, and structural relationships based on domination and subordination, both within the Loretto Community and beyond it.

A social change movement, the Loretto Women's Network acts to affirm the rights of all women in church and society, regardless of their racial, ethnic, class, or national background, their age, or their sexual orientation. Among these rights are:

- 1) the right to be treated as equals in relationships, institutions, and structures;
- 2) the right to equal access to goods, services, status, and power; and
- 3) the right to make those decisions which affect their lives, bodies, and properties.

Substantive agreements among Network members include the following stands:

- 1) We actively oppose all forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism, and endorse the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)\*.
- 2) We work diligently for the correction of patriarchal structures regarding the environment of our planet, affirming the principles in ecofeminism which respect all creation and oppose the practice and effects of a culture of domination.
- 3) We commit ourselves to work for the ecclesial and civil rights of gay and lesbian persons.
- 4) We commit ourselves to work for the full equality of women and men in all aspects of ecclesial life, including full access to all sacramental ministries.
- 5) We support women as ultimate agents of moral decision-making in matters of reproduction.
- 6) We endorse the Platform for Action\* adopted in September 1995 at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, and work to move this platform forward.
- 7) We support civil and ecclesial dissent consistent with our values, carried out by an individual or by a group.
- 8) We embrace the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals\* which all 192 member states have pledged to meet by 2015.
- 9) Because most victims of war are non-combatants—mainly women and children as well as our fragile planet—we strongly oppose war and militarism. We recognize the urgency of the need to be advocates for peace, and for the justice which underlies it.

The Loretto Women's Network stands in solidarity with others working for the empowerment of women both nationally and internationally. We act within Loretto and also in the public forum. At times we work singly; at other times we work in small groups or geographic clusters. We also act as network and in coalition with others.

*\*Explanation below*

## ***The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)***

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women, defining what constitutes discrimination against women and setting up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The convention defines discrimination against women as **“... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men & women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”**

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life—including the right to vote and to stand for election—as well as education, health and employment. States agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations. It affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children. States also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in & exploitation of women.

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

The Convention, which entered into force on 3 September 1981, has, as of May 2005, received support of over 90% of UN members. The US is not a signatory to CEDAW.

### **The Beijing Platform for Action: agenda for women's empowerment**

Critical areas of concern include:

- The persistent & increasing burden of poverty on women;
- Unequal access to education and training;
- Unequal access to health care and related services;
- Violence against women;
- The effects of armed or other conflict on women, including living under foreign occupation;
- Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities & access to resources;
- Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
- Fewer mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;
- Lack of respect for and promotion and protection of women's human rights;
- Stereotyping of women and unequal access to, and participation in, communication systems, especially in the media;
- Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and safeguarding of the environment;
- Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

### **UN Millennium Development Goals**

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equity and empower women; Reduce child mortality; Improve maternal health; Combat HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability.

*(Revised and approved June 2009)*