

## March 11, 2010 - United Nations – 54th Commission on the Status of Women



**(ANS – United Nations)** – Over 3,000 representatives of NGOs from around the world participated in the 54th Commission on the Status of Women, held at U.N. headquarters in New York, beginning on March 2 and due to end March 12. The Salesian Family is making a significant contribution.

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, March 8, the Commission on the Status of Women – a working commission of the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) involved in examining the progress toward women’s equality throughout the world and making recommendations for the promotion of women’s rights in the political, economic, and social fields – began a two-week session to study the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Action Platform (1995) and the results following the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (2000).

Country reports, keynote speakers, and parallel events hosted by NGOs and governments addressed many of the issues and challenges faced by women in the diverse countries of the world. The agenda included: the feminization of poverty; the neglect of human rights; the impact of climate change; the use of pornography and social media to exploit women and girls; indigenous women; violence against women; forced migration; and health issues, especially HIV/AIDS.

The Salesian Family participated in the Commission through the ECOSOC-accredited Salesian NGOs: Salesian Missions (for the SDBs) and International Mary Help of Christians Institute (for the FMAs). The SDB and FMA representatives, Fr. Thomas Brennan and Sr. Bernadette Sangma, prepared an oral statement on indigenous women, calling attention to this frequently neglected and marginalized community.

The FMAs hosted a parallel event on the empowerment of indigenous women. Additionally, Fr. Brennan, as a member of the executive committees of the NGO committees on HIV/AIDS and migration, helped organize two other parallel events: Women’s Health and Mental Health in Times of Crisis: War, Natural Disasters, Epidemics; and Gaps in the Beijing Platform: the Children of Migrants.

On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the U.N. secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said that “until women are freed from poverty and injustice, all our aims -- peace, security sustainable development -- are in danger.”