



UN Human Rights Council 16th session
Item 6 Consideration of UPR - Mauritania

Mr. President,

Sudwind is deeply concerned about the strong persistence of serious violations of women and children rights throughout Mauritania. Gender discriminatory laws, violence against women, corporal punishment of children, domestic slavery and rape are highly prevalent.

Particularly shocking is the wide-spread presence of harmful traditional practices including early age marriage, FGM and force-feeding, which is accompanied by coercive measures, e.g. squeezing children's toes between *zayar* sticks. Many girls bleed to death during FGM procedures or die on the consequences of force-feeding through vomit choking or dangerous pills. This clearly undermines the object and purpose of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Sustainable societal developments, which condemn sexual violence, gender discrimination and harmful traditional practices, call for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach. For this to happen, it is the Government's primary obligation to make available all resources needed to ensure women and girls fullest access to education, protect them from exclusion and violence, to promote gender equality and to enhance the participation of women in all areas of society.

In order to eliminate the wide gap between rhetoric and implementation, Sudwind urges the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to:

- i. quickly complete the process of withdrawing its general reservation to CRC and CEDAW as a matter of urgency;
- ii. speed up the adoption of a comprehensive national human rights policy in full conformity with its international and regional human rights obligations, including the criminalization of FGM and force-feeding;
- iii. strengthen the National Human Rights Commission and adopt specific laws prohibiting all forms of violence against women, including martial rape;
and
- iv. develop clear-cut strategies preventing discrimination against women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence, so that they will not be accused of adultery and prosecuted like criminals.

Thank you, Mr. President.