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IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

A warning to women not to expect too much from a bill of rights or a women's charter came today from Advocate Francis Bosman, chairman of the Women's Bureau working group on "Women - and the Law".

Advocate Bosman, South Africa's Chief Family Advocate, said no bill of rights could wipe away women's problems and "we must guard against raising their unrealistic expectations".

"The idea that a so-called charter of women's rights is the answer to all the problems experienced by women is a total misconception" she said.

Much could be said for the general clause suggested by the Law Commission which is akin to the position in the USA.

Adv Bosman called for a new value system in our society. She said there was very little discrimination against women specifically embodied in South African Legislation - possibly except women working in mines underground or participating in professional boxing and wrestling matches and the retention of the marital power of the husband

in marriages entered into before 1984 (1988 for Blacks) although the basis for this was rather in the contractual relationship between the parties which came into existence before the legislation abolishing the marital power was passed.

Most of the discrimination experienced by women in their homes and in the workplace could be ascribed to certain social, political, cultural and economic norms and value systems prevailing in South African society and of course the absence of an Act similar to the Sex Discrimination Act which applies in England.

"The law cannot change the hearts and minds of people. It cannot bring about a revolution of the heart and spirit. This can only come as a result of education and above all of the genuine acceptance by society at large of a new value system. This above all is what women should strive for - first to educate their children and instil in them love and respect for all fellow human beings and secondly to assert themselves in their homes, in the work place and in society in a dignified and responsible manner" she said.

11 May 1992