



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 December 2024

English only

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-ninth session

10–21 March 2025

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to
the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by American Bar Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The American Bar Association welcomes the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and commemorates the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a proud participant in the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, which established a framework for the advancement of women's rights, the American Bar Association remains unwavering in its commitment to championing gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment.

The American Bar Association, founded in 1878, is a global leader in advancing the legal profession, justice, human rights, and the rule of law. With a global membership of lawyers, judges, and legal professionals, the American Bar Association works to promote inclusive legal and justice systems, protect judicial independence and the independence of the legal profession, advocate for fair laws, and enhance public understanding of the core principles of justice, human rights, and democracy through the rule of law.

Building on our participation in the coalition of international human rights organizations active in providing input on the legal framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the American Bar Association continues to prioritize access to justice, legal rights, equal protection of the law, the elimination of violence against women and girls, women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels, and international cooperation. We are dedicated to advancing the ability of women and girls to meaningfully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms consistent with international human rights law and obligations.

This Beijing+30 review underscores the significant progress made in the past three decades in women's rights, the ongoing challenges that remain, and the need for accelerated progress to achieve gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action closely align with the broader goals for sustainable development, peace and security, and digital inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and the newly adopted Pact for the Future with its annexes, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations.

The American Bar Association remains committed to supporting efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to address ongoing and emerging legal and justice challenges faced by women and girls worldwide. Through collective action, we can create a more just, equitable, and inclusive world for all.

Expanding Access to Justice by Women and Girls

Access to justice is crucial for ensuring the protection of women's and girls' rights under the rule of law. As emphasized in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, equal access to justice is essential for empowering women and girls to assert their rights, seek redress, and participate fully in society. Governments, international organizations, the justice sector, and civil society should take action to expand access to justice. This includes implementing people-centric approaches, improving formal and informal justice systems, and expanding access to justice services.

The American Bar Association's work on access to justice is multifaceted, encompassing standards for courts, trainings for lawyers and judges, legal and technical assistance, and best practices guidance for judiciaries, legal aid organizations, and bar associations. By endorsing the Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action, the Hague Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for All, and implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16.3, the American Bar Association commits to working with the global community to create a world where everyone enjoys meaningful access to justice.

Eradicating Discriminatory Laws and Policies

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action contain numerous provisions calling for legal reforms to eliminate gender-based discrimination, ensure equal protection under the law, promote equal access to resources, and uphold the principle of non-discriminatory rule of law. Eliminating discriminatory laws and policies is crucial for creating a legal environment that supports gender equality, women's rights, women's economic empowerment, and the full participation of women and girls in all aspects of society free from discrimination and exclusion.

The American Bar Association continues to endorse the importance of legal reforms to eradicate discriminatory laws and the diverse actions that must be taken by governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Our domestic and global activities support efforts to adopt and enforce legal provisions that protect and safeguard the rights of women and girls. We provide expert analysis and technical assistance with legal reforms to prohibit discrimination and promote equality in areas such as access to credit, property rights, healthcare, education, and family relationships.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

The continued prevalence and severity of violence against women and girls is a global crisis that demands urgent attention. Despite the strong global commitment to action outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, violence against women and girls persists. Further actions are needed to address the rights of those affected, particularly in marginalized and vulnerable communities where women and girls endure higher rates of violence, abuse, discrimination, and exploitation. We must prioritize actions to hold perpetrators accountable, protect victims, and address the root causes of this widespread and deeply harmful injustice.

Governments can demonstrate their commitment to ending violence against women and girls by strengthening legal frameworks, enforcing these laws effectively, expanding access to justice for victims, and providing meaningful remedies and essential services. This includes training law enforcement personnel to identify and investigate cases of gender-based violence, training prosecutors and judges so that they have the expertise to handle the cases, and expanding laws to protect against online harassment, cyberstalking, and other forms of technology-facilitated violence.

Protecting Women's Rights Defenders

Women's rights defenders, including women climate and environmental defenders, play a crucial role in advancing gender equality and ensuring that women and girls can fully exercise their legal rights. Governments must create a safe and supportive environment for these defenders by enacting and enforcing laws that safeguard their rights and by holding perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

The American Bar Association is committed to supporting human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, and promoting their safety and security. We advocate for legal reforms, provide legal assistance to those facing legal challenges, raise public awareness, and foster networks of defenders worldwide. Through these efforts, we contribute to a global environment where women's rights

defenders can operate without fear of reprisal and effectively advance the legal rights of women and girls.

Empowering Women's Participation in Justice Systems

Women's representation in both formal and informal justice systems is essential for achieving gender equality and ensuring the fair and impartial delivery of justice. By increasing opportunities for women's participation at all levels within justice systems, we can strengthen justice institutions. Women judges bring diverse perspectives to the bench, contributing to more inclusive and equitable justice systems. This can enhance public trust in the legal and justice systems and promote a more just and equitable society where women have equal access to justice and can fully participate in all aspects of life.

Ensuring the safety and security of courts and court personnel, including women, remains an urgent and critical challenge. An independent legal profession and independent judiciary are indispensable to the broader processes of democracy and to the full enjoyment and realization of individual rights and human dignity by all, including women and girls. Violence against judges and court staff can have far-reaching consequences for the functioning of the justice system, public trust, and the rule of law. Governments should implement measures to protect court personnel, including security protocols, training programs, and support services.

Advancing Women's Participation in Decision-Making Processes at All Levels

Having women leaders at all levels is essential for creating more inclusive and equitable institutions and advancing gender equality. The American Bar Association is taking action to break down barriers and help create a pipeline for women's leadership. We provide resources, advocate for policies, and support initiatives that help women succeed and advance in the legal and justice professions, as well as in other sectors. Our work globally includes research, leadership development programs, policy recommendations, awards, and international collaboration.

Fostering International Cooperation and Partnerships

The American Bar Association is steadfastly committed to working with the global community and partners worldwide to advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls. By fostering international cooperation and building partnerships, we can work collectively to end discrimination and violence and create a more just, equitable, and inclusive world for all.
