



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 November 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**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 Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries and Sisters of Charity Federation, non-governmental organizations 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

Introduction

We as Faith based organizations involved at the grassroots in 46 countries around the globe are concerned about the sufferings of millions of women and girls. The structural injustices in the current global economic and social system forget to ensure that sustainable development need to be people centred and protect the environment. Sustainable development is not only an economic, but is also an issue of gender justice and ethics. Pouring funds into weapons instead of health care and education is an ill-advised choice that must be challenged. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon states, that annual global spending on war and violence is 600 times greater than spending on peace and social progress, this is in no way justifiable.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda provide the Member States the opportunity to address realistically sustainable development issues that embrace the social, economic and environmental concerns of everyone, to ensure that “no one is left behind”.

It is commendable that the Preamble of — Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and achieve gender equality of all women and girls.”

Paragraph 20 gives hope for a shift towards transformation — “Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets. The achievement of the full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of this agenda is crucial.”

We appreciate the Member States for mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically goal #5.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, too has reiterated the need for gender equality as it states — “We reaffirm that achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and the full realization of their human rights is essential to achieving sustained, inclusive, and equitable economic growth and sustainable development. We reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies. We recommit to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation and transformative actions for the promotion of gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment at all levels, ensure women’s equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and

leadership in the economy and to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination in all its forms.” AAAA 6

“Evidence shows that gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieve sustainable development and significantly enhance economic growth and productivity. We commit to promote social inclusion in our domestic policies. We will promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws, social infrastructure and policies for sustainable development, as well as to enable women’s full and equal participation in the economy, and their equal access to decision-making processes and leadership”. AAAA 21

Respect the human rights of women

The above mentioned commitments give rise to tremendous potential for engagement of all actors — governments, civil society and private sector. As the world prepares for the implementation, we align ourselves with the hundreds of civil society organizations and networks who had engaged in the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, as well as in women’s issues, to raise the following concerns:

Gender equality and women’s empowerment seem to speak more to “Gender Equality as Smart Economics” than to women and girls’ entitlement to human rights and show a strong tendency towards the instrumentalization of women by stating that women’s empowerment is vital to enhance economic growth and productivity. Economic growth and development objectives do not operate in a vacuum but are closely interconnected with human rights.

There is mounting evidence that social protection floors contribute significantly to the reduction of extreme Poverty and Inequality while in reality, 75-80 per cent of families globally do not have social protection. Allocation of resources to development needs must ensure that it is inclusive and rights-based. The obligation of States to provide social protection floors was reiterated in several United Nations documents like the Rio +20 Outcome document “The future we want” and International Labour Organization recommendation 202.

“We are committed to women’s and girls’ equal rights and opportunities in political and economic decision-making and resource allocation and to remove any barriers that prevent women from being full participants in the economy. We resolve to undertake legislation and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology. We further encourage the private sector to contribute to advancing gender equality through striving to ensure women’s full and productive employment and decent work, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal opportunities, as well as protecting them against discrimination and abuse in the workplace” AAAA 41

2030 Agenda Declaration under Our Vision, #7 promises, “A world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene ...” This is central to the lives of women and girls, particularly in the developing world where they spend countless hours collecting drinking water. Sanitation facilities are essential to the human

dignity of women and girls and their safety. It will protect them from becoming victims of violence and rapes.

“We reaffirm the importance of meeting in full existing commitments under international conventions, including on climate change and related global challenges” AAAA 60

We recommend all governments to:

- Fulfil all existing commitments under International Conventions/Conferences.
- Provide for Women’s and Girls basic and ongoing educational opportunities and promote an equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in family, work and society, as well as equal access to economic and political power.
- Remove economic, legal and other obstacles to women’s ownership of land and inheritance, gender discrimination in lending practices and in access to social security and pensions.
- Respect the human rights of women by Investing in domestic agriculture, where women workers are predominate and ensure space for women’s active and meaningful participation and leadership in macroeconomic policy and decision-making.
- Implement the commitment to human right to safe drinking water and improved sanitation.
- Adopt coherent policies on gender responsive budgeting across all sectors, for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as a cross cutting issue across the spectrum of development.
- For national ownership and political will to implement the Sustainable Development Goal 5 in its entirety, without cherry picking the targets under the guise of culture, tradition and customary practices.

Conclusion:

The United Nation’s Member States have made numerous commitments given the past 70 years and unfortunately the plight of millions of girls and women have not much improved. Given the multiple crises of poverty, violence and conflicts as well as climate disasters, Sustainable Development Goal 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” can be accomplished if only the above commitments are taken seriously and implemented systematically.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are indeed a justice issue — nothing about women without women!

Endorsing organizations with Special Economic and Social Council Status:

- Congregations of St. Joseph — in general consultative status with ECOSOC
- Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul
- Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Loreto Generalate.