



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
23 November 2019

English only

---

### Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-fourth session

9–20 March 2020

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 World Society of Victimology, 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 World Society of Victimology is a not-for-profit nongovernmental organization with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the Council of Europe. Its purpose is to advance victimological research and practices around the world; to encourage interdisciplinary and comparative work and research in this field; and to advance cooperation between international, national, regional, and local agencies and other groups that are concerned with the problems of victims.

### **Introduction**

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 is a landmark document on women's empowerment and a blue-print for the attainment of gender equality and respect for women's and girls' human rights. Notwithstanding the passage of time, gender equality remains elusive. Gender inequality, which is rooted in, among other factors, inappropriate socio-cultural norms, persists in many countries.

The World Society of Victimology holds that concrete steps must be taken to ensure gender equality, tackle economic disadvantage, address social inequities, eliminate discrimination, and attain genuine justice, including reproductive and sexual justice.

### **Some of the challenges**

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constructs to delivering the promises on women's and girls' fundamental rights. The Sustainable Development Goals focus on achieving universal quality education, improving women's and girls' health and well-being, and affording women decent employment, while eradicating exploitation and empowering women. Despite the inroads made, these are still far from the desired thresholds.

Millions of girls across the globe are never enrolled in school. Many are being denied an education. They are exploited and/or abused. They suffer discrimination; and their rights are ignored. These girls want to learn. They want knowledge, skills, and opportunities to attain decent work. In many countries, however, education for girls is often a low budget priority.

Many girls and women who obtain employment do not receive equal pay for equal work. Too many girls and women are able to fulfil their potential. Yet, their involvement in the workforce is a crucial determinant of sustainable development. Closing the gender gap and advancing women's equality in the public, private, and social sectors is crucial.

On reproductive and maternal health, millions of women and girls, especially in developing countries, have an unmet need for family planning, contributing to millions of unplanned pregnancies and millions of abortions every year. Hundreds of women and girls die each day from preventable pregnancy-related causes. Contrary, accessible maternal health services reduce abortions and deaths in pregnancy.

There is a growing awareness of the prevalence and causes of interpersonal violence and gender-based violence, as well as the effects on women and children. Yet such violence continues to manifest in numerous ways: female infanticide; early and forced marriage; "honor" killings; female genital mutilation and cutting; child sexual abuse and exploitation; trafficking in persons; sexual coercion; harassment and abuse; neglect; domestic violence; economic deprivation; and elder abuse.

An estimated 140 million girls, for example, will become child brides between 2011 and 2020. These children are typically denied an education, are “at risk” of complications related to premature childbearing, and more vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

Furthermore, one in three women worldwide has been physically, mentally, or emotionally abused in their lifetime. Whether it’s domestic abuse, sexual assault (e.g., rape), or sexual trafficking, gender-based violence denies far too many women the opportunity to live happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

In the context of sustainable development, in addition to the human toll, gender-based violence results in substantial economic costs for all. The cost of violence against women, for instance, could amount to around 2 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), which is equivalent to \$1.5 trillion. In some countries the cost of gender-based violence is comparable to the entire health budget, or a substantial proportion of consolidated state revenue.

Other challenges include rising fundamentalisms, political turmoil, armed conflict, and backlash against feminism, as well as the power imbalances and structural factors that drive inequality between women and men that prevail everywhere.

### **Some of the achievements**

Achievements are not confined to developed nations. Measures towards attaining gender equality in developing nations include providing access to vaccines, widening access to primary education, improving basic health care, and countering violence against women and children. In India, for example, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has schemes, such as support to training and employment program for women, that aim to ensure women are skilled for and have access to decent employment. One Stop Centres have been established to provide support and assistance for women victims of violence. In Bhutan, the inclusion of women into small and medium enterprises is rising with a recent estimate indicating about one third of the registered micro, small, and medium enterprises were owned and managed by women. In Saudi Arabia, reforms allow women to drive (even unescorted) and women’s participation in the paid workforce is increasing. Ethiopia has introduced joint land registration, with the names and photographs of both husband and wife included on certificates, thereby formalizing women’s rights to the land that they might farm.

Among developed nations, the United Kingdom has introduced an initiative aimed at advancing women’s economic empowerment and closing the gender pay gap. Canada has implemented a programme to provide women entrepreneurs with access to financial talent, networks, and expertise. It has also introduced parental sharing benefits to encourage and to support equitable approaches to childcare within the home.

### **Ways forward**

The World Society of Victimology concurs that 2020 is a pivotal year for the accelerated realization of gender equality. It also notes that there has been progress, but much work is still needed.

The World Society of Victimology calls on Member States, international agencies, business, and civil society to:

- Respect the rights of all women and girls to schooling, education, and decent work.

- Respect the rights of all women and girls to a sustainable and healthy environment and to health care services that respond to their needs.
- Respect the rights of all women and girls to live free of oppression, discrimination, coercion, and violence.
- Afford women and girls opportunities to participate in a shared future and to listen to their voices without being dismissive.
- Invest, including funding, in initiatives, programmes, and other to ensure women and girls are treated equally in social, economic, and all other aspects of society.
- Accelerate actions to counter patriarchy, free men and boys from oppressive masculinities, and instill social norms grounded on inclusiveness, equality, and gender justice.
- Confirm their commitment to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence and acceptance of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women reporting standards.

The World Society of Victimology asserts that rhetoric must become reality. In no country do women enjoy the same rights as men. The World Society of Victimology's members do not want to imagine gender equality, but rather they want it and are keen to partner in solutions necessary for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

---