



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
9 January 2020

English only

---

## Commission on Population and Development

### Fifty-third session

30 March–3 April 2020

Item 3 of the provisional agenda<sup>1</sup>

**General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels**

**3 (b): Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development**

### **Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), Soroptimist International (SI) and Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council<sup>2</sup>**

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.

---

<sup>1</sup> E/CN.9/2020/1.

<sup>2</sup> The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Soroptimist International, Associated Country Women of the World and Women for Water Partnership recognize that the right to food and other human rights are inextricably interconnected and urge states to examine the ways and means of overcoming obstacles to the realization of the basic right to nutritious food. Food security is compromised and threatened by climate change, armed conflict, population growth, inadequate water supply, over-harvesting of plants, fish, and wildlife, and the destruction of wild food habitats that leads to diminished food resources.

Rural women, in particular, play a vital role in agricultural production, a critical component of food security. However, they are often unable to reach their full potential due to discriminatory societal policies and laws. Women are less likely to own their own land, property laws discriminate against women inheriting family property, widows are discarded in their rights to inherit from their deceased husbands, and patriarchal social customs often favour male relatives. These barriers not only threaten the food security of rural women and their families, but the wider world as family farms are responsible for more than 80 per cent of the world's food production. Though holding only 15 per cent of the land, rural women account for more than 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce. We urge member states to recognize the role women play in food production and include them in discussions relating to food production and food security.

Soroptimist International (SI) is a global volunteer movement of professional women, existing for almost 100 years, with a network of over 75,000 club members in 122 countries. SI's mission is to transform the lives and status of women and girls and to accomplish this, we work at a local, national and international level to Educate, Empower and Enable opportunities for women and girls. Next to advocating for human rights and gender equality together with representatives at seven UN centres in the world, our membership supports and initiates grassroots projects that help and sustain women and girls to achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in communities worldwide.

SI's priority area of focus currently is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), concentrating on Goal 4 — Quality Education and Vocational Training and Goal 5— Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and SDG 6— clean drinking water and safe sanitation. The goals of the SI President's Appeal project: Women, Water, Leadership (WW&L) is to provide women and girls with the opportunity to get the education and vocational training they need to be an equal partner to manage the most essential ingredients of life: water (water security for all), sanitation, food and energy. The WW&L project unites Soroptimists worldwide as a global voice for women to increase awareness of the vital role of women as equal partners at all levels of the water sector in a programme empowering women and girls into leading positions in managing the water/food/energy nexus. Women and girls have the capacity, experience and education they need to take leadership in managing water and sanitation. The ripple effect of WW&L results in the empowerment of an astonishing amount of small holder women farmers that are economically independent, are experts in their field, started businesses and provide a better life for their communities and families.

The Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) is a global network of rural women's organisations, representing more than nine million women living in rural and non-urban communities. Founded in 1929, ACWW held expert-consultant status with the League of Nations' Nutrition Committee, has continued into Consultative Status with the United Nations, and contributed to the creation of targets and indicators for both the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

For more than 40 years, ACWW has funded small-scale, women-led food security, nutrition education, and sustainable agricultural projects in 52 less-developed countries.

Whilst making vital local changes by supporting and implementing local solutions and initiatives, projects of this type cannot affect the systematic, institutional advancements necessary for global food security. This responsibility must lie with States Parties but must also be informed by rural women who have experience and expertise, to achieve genuine change.

Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) is a worldwide network of 28 women organisations active in the field of gender, water and sanitation and sustainable development. What unites WfWP is that we strive towards a water secure world: Equitable access to water for all, and for all uses as key of women's empowerment. We envision a water secure world in which women exercise their full potential to achieve sustainable and equitable development.

WfWP positions women as active leaders and agents of change in the water, gender, food and energy nexus. Linking day-to-day practice to national and international level and vice versa, makes WfWP a unique network and a linking pin between the grassroot level and national and international stakeholders. WfWP uses water as an entry point to women's empowerment, due to the central part that women play in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. WfWP Core Activities: Demand driven projects —Knowledge exchange and learning— Lobby and Advocacy.

These are the actions we propose for the future:

- States, the private sector, and NGOs should provide for effective remedies to food insecurity and to impediments and violations of the human right to food. Food security related decisions must be made with the participation of an informed public that includes women and girls. Though the UN Decade of Family Farming makes a good start in recognising the critical role of rural women, it does not go far enough in challenging States Parties' apathy towards the tenuous and fragile living conditions of women in rural communities.
- Each State should adopt a legal and institutional framework that assists those within its jurisdiction to provide for food security, including water rights, land rights, transportation systems, and food storage and distribution systems.
- States should provide lifelong learning opportunities, training and capacity building that target women and girls and support their roles in improving food security and empower them to be leaders, experts and agents of change.
- States should fully implement their Paris Agreement COP21 commitments, to prevent deterioration of human rights, including the rights to food, water, and land.
- States should fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, including creating appropriate legal measures to incorporate the Convention into domestic law. This must include a functional institutional mechanism, and an understanding of Article 14 as a critical step in strengthening food security.

With populations increasing, more than 820 million people annually suffering food insecurity, and climate change increasing the risk to rural communities, water and food security, all actors must adjust their platforms for discussion to include women from all levels of society and ensure that the voices of rural women do not remain unheard.