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

Statement submitted by UNANIMA International, 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 Call for an intersectional approach to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action especially in regards to women's migration

Twenty years ago, the United Nations created an ambitious resolution on gender equality at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. This document, known to all of us as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, calls for women's empowerment and "active participation in all spheres of public and private life," including the economic, the social, and the political spheres. With an emphasis on human rights, social justice, development and peace, this resolution holds the potential to transform societal standards perpetuating violence against women daily worldwide.

In our increasingly interconnected world, the movement and mobility of all peoples is a topic of utmost importance. Immigration transcends the economic, social, and political spheres directly addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action; however, migration is not discussed in the document. In fact, the word "migrant" is only mentioned in section 225 under the section on the Human Rights of Women, despite the fact that approximately 107 million women migrate internationally yearly, and "a large portion of the 740 million people who migrate within their countries" annually are women ([A/68/178](#)). While section 225 brings important factors regarding women in migration to the resolution, it does not suffice to cover the many varied barriers and violence women face in the global migration system today.

To adequately address the experience of migrant women in order to stop the violence and discrimination the female migrant faces, we must look at the changing trends in international migration patterns. Myriad studies show that half of international migrants are women, and the majority of migrants moving within their home country are women ([A/68/178](#), Gender Equality & Trade Policy). While some of these women are refugees, and/or are fleeing violence or climate change, the majority of these women migrants are crossing boundaries today for reasons of economics and employment. As they move autonomously to find new employment opportunities, they face what the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality calls a "double disadvantage." Not only are they disadvantaged due to their status as migrants, but due to their status as women as well.

Unfortunately, "double" does not begin to sufficiently cover the disadvantages faced by the woman navigating the global migration system. She faces discrimination and is subjected to violence not only due to her gender and status as immigrant, but her race, class, religion, ability, sexuality, age as well. In order to prioritize the rights of women migrants, we must not only consider the changing trend toward economic migration, but the unique and intersectional experiences of the women themselves.

Intersectionality is not a new concept in the vocabulary and goals of the United Nations. Former Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Yakin Ertürk, made the case for intersectionality in her 2009 report titled "15 Years of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences." Ertürk clearly states that to end violence and achieve equality, the

United Nations must “address the effects of multiple systems of discrimination operating simultaneously, rather than address each form of discrimination in isolation of the other” (48). She also states that “the development of methods, reporting procedures and evaluation tools for implementing and monitoring intersectionality remains to be undertaken” (48). The need for intersectional policies and approaches to gender equality has never been graver, and this Commission on the Status of Women provides the perfect opportunity for a recommitment and prioritization of intersectionality.

As we move towards a post-2015 agenda, we must directly address the experience of women migrants today. These migrants are seeking jobs and opportunities across national boundaries, no longer necessarily directly connected to family reunification, as was much of the migration of the past. The Secretary General’s report on “Violence Against Women Migrant Workers” recognized that female migrants are incomparably financially disadvantaged, and face violence, abuse, and discrimination at all stages of their immigration journey ([A/68/178](#) Article 7). Ignoring the needs and experiences of this growing population would prevent the possibility for equality.

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for the empowerment of women for gender equality, and we must extend such plans for empowerment directly and explicitly to the female migrants facing such excessive discrimination and violence. Member states, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots activists must all work towards economic, social, and political equality for the woman migrant. To do so, we must honour her agency and autonomy. We must take into consideration not only her gender and status as immigrant, but her race, ability, sexuality, religion, age, and any other identity which she considers important as well. We must move beyond a paradigm of victimization of women, especially those who migrate, for their minority statuses.

Conclusion

To achieve the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action we must look at all challenges facing gender equality. As the Platform for Action lacks any explicit concerns or objectives for migrants, we must prioritize reimagining how this increasing population of female, economic migrants will be integrated into the post-2015 agenda and future of the Beijing Declaration.

Intersectionality encourages a holistic, complex understanding of the barriers facing women which prohibit gender equality worldwide. Though development and progress agendas today often demand singular policies, intersectionality, especially in regards to migration, allows policymakers and scholars alike a nuanced look into the multiple contexts, drivers, and perpetrators of violence and inequality. Without this approach, diversity will remain overlooked as voices are silenced. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provides the perfect platform to make a strong statement in support of progressive and intersectional approaches to gender, migration, and equality.

The barriers to gender equality cross national borders, as well as the boundaries between race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, ability, and age. In order to end gender-based discrimination and violence, an intersectional approach is absolutely necessary.

Recommendations

We call on the Commission on the Status of Women to:

Integrate and prioritize female migrants in the future of the Beijing Platform for action.

Empower female migrants through policies regarding economic and political equality for women and migrants.

Recognize the discrimination and abuse female economic migrants face at all stages of immigration.

Employ intersectional language so that a woman's gender is not recognized as the only barrier to the full expression of her human rights.

Promote the empowerment of women through an agenda focused on agency and autonomy.

Statement endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, Curia Generalizia Agostiniana, Dominican Leadership Conference, Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Passionists International, Pax Christi International, International Catholic Peace Movement, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Sisters of Charity Federation, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries.
