



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2014

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

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 International Institute for Child Protection, 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 process of helping women to make progress and to do things successfully based on individual and collective efforts and skills are a matter of human rights promotion, protection and a condition for social justice that should be a driving force for empowerment of women. Such measures when taken into consideration could empower women and ensure that women achieve political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security. One group of women that need attention in this regard is the small scale cross border female traders.

It is therefore of concern that the issue of cross border trading, import duty levied on goods and services in Africa and in many parts of the world be examined closely with the well-being of female cross border traders in mind. Cross border trading, particularly in Africa, is on the rise and it involves large numbers of women.

Recent observations have shown that cross border trade is an income generating activity for both rural and urban dwellers. Over 80 per cent of traders' crossing borders in Africa are women. They are doing trading with the hope that they can improve their individual and collective objectives to promote their economic independence, increase their chances of self-employment and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty that hampers their livelihood and that of their children and family. These women traders are mainly from low income, disadvantaged groups and communities. They consist of the group of women who over the years are excluded in the socio-economic development of their countries. The basis therefore for their involvement in cross border trading is the ultimate search of economic independence.

It is indeed appropriate to mention that profits from cross border trading activities generated by these women is used in paying their children's school fees, family medical bills, and housing, among other things for many households predominantly in Africa. However, the quest for women to develop their full potential and ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world and enhancing their role in the development process, is seriously affected by inequality in economic structures and policies in all its forms.

One of the challenges confronting these women is the uncompromising nature of the central authority revenue collection activities. Another area where women cross border traders encounter challenges is in the various and sometimes endless payment of taxes from import duty to municipal/local taxes on the goods or services; value as low as USD 200 to 1,000. This is further complicated by higher rents for shops and other overheads.

It is therefore of urgency to call on the Commission on the Status of Women to take measures necessary to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of the global female cross border traders, the international/local revenue authorities to put in place effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender sensitive policies, and grant import duty/tax breaks for female cross border traders with capital less than USD 1,000 anywhere in the world.