



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017

A public statement from the Associated Country Women of the World

International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on March 8, raising awareness of the crucial and positive contribution of women and girls globally, whilst also drawing attention to the inequalities, injustices and inexcusable suffering to which women are subject. The Associated Country Women of the World call on all governments and bodies globally to formally recognise and protect the rights and freedoms of women and girls, and build towards the 2030 Agenda by striving for gender equality, investing in education and safeguarding from violence.

It is important to recognise that inequality exists at every level of society. Women hold only 22% of parliamentary seats worldwide. They spend, on average, 90% of their earned income on their families (in contrast with 30-40% for men) and represent two thirds of illiterate adults globally and only 5% of national heads of state. Global averages show that one in four women are physically or sexually abused during pregnancy and suffer invasive and abusive treatments such as forced early marriage, domestic violence and murder, and female genital mutilation/cutting.

The Associated Country Women of the World calls on those governments who have not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to do so with immediate effect and take a role in securing its implementation. Whilst CEDAW has been acknowledged and ratified by the vast majority of countries in the world, it is notable that the United States of America, Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga remain outside this framework. ACWW appeals to these nations to fully ratify CEDAW, and for other members of the international community to exert pressure and influence on these states to promote the Convention's adoption. It is also noted that the Holy See has not ratified the Convention, and we call on Pope Francis to show leadership on this issue.

ACWW's members and societies have passed resolutions against the practise of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the trafficking of women and children, and violence against women and girls. Additional policies on gender perspective and the rights of women and girl refugees and those most at risk from conflict have been agreed at Conferences. It is clear that women in rural areas are extremely vulnerable to gender-based violence, particularly because of their isolation. The lack of enforcement of relevant legislation, and monitoring of living conditions combined with a lack of appropriate support services all contribute to this vulnerability.

We call for investment in education for women and girls, equal access to healthcare and national support services, land rights and safe sanitary provisions. As an organisation, we are committed to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and we are actively working for sustainable improvement in the living conditions of women. We are proud to announce that we will mark the International Day of Rural Women by convening the first International Forum on Rural Women – this a stepping stone to carrying out a global survey of the living conditions of rural women around the world with the support of Non-Governmental and Society partners.

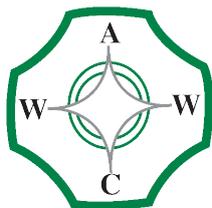
Ruth Shanks AM
ACWW World President

References

- 1 UN Women *“Step it Up for Gender Equality”*
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up>
- 2 United Nations Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women *“UNiTE”*
<http://endviolence.un.org/>
- 3 UN Women *“#HeforShe”*
<http://www.heforshe.org/en>
- 4 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals *“SDG 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.”*
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>
- 4 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
“Article 14:
 1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.
 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
 - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
 - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;
 - (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;
 - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
 - (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;
 - (f) To participate in all community activities;
 - (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
 - (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

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