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Statement submitted by African Action on AIDS, Associated Country Women of the World, European Union of Women, Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Graduate Women International (GWI), International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women/Conseil International des Femmes, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of Social Workers, International Inner Wheel, Pax Romana, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Verein zur Forderung der Volkerverständigung, Women’s International Zionist Organization and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations 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

Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers and the undersigned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with Economic and Social Council and member organisations of the “NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna” present the following statement to the members and observers of the 61st UN Commission on the Status of Women:

Economic empowerment of women is essential to enhance gender equality and secure women's equal status and participation in every professional, social and political field. Access to resources is as important for achieving independent lives as education, ability or place of origin, and the contribution of women as equal partners in modern economies is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Considering that implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals would further enhance gender equality and empowerment of women in the economic sphere, thereby benefitting individuals, families, and communities and contributing to stronger, more cohesive societies;

Recognizing that legal status does not always reflect the real status in society, and that legal discrimination continues to exist, e.g. laws governing inheritance or ownership of land and property;

Underlining that education is critical for achieving equality;

Stressing that gender-specific health care should cover the entire lifespan of girls and women and not be limited to sexual and reproductive health, and that health in the workplace is important in economic participation in industrial as well as emerging economies;

Demanding the full implementation of International Labour Organisation Conventions that commit to ensure decent work and gender equality in the workplace;

Reiterating that the elimination of all forms of violence against women in both public and private spheres is critical in the fight against inequality, as violence is often used for domination and intimidation;

Stressing that, as funding activities to empower women is necessary to create a level playing field, this funding cannot depend on voluntary donations, but must be included in public spending;

Calling for the adoption of gender budgeting as a tool to analyse public spending, budgets and final accounts to ensure a fair and transparent distribution of public funds by all member states and international organizations;

To ensure the full economic empowerment of women by 2030, the undersigned member organisations of the “NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna” submit recommendations for consideration by the members and observers of CSW61:

(a) Equal access to affordable education (primary, secondary and tertiary) is a prerequisite to women's economic equality. Education should not focus on gender, but on abilities and talents, and train girls and women to lead and to work in teams. Science and mathematics as well as information technology training should be emphasized;

(b) Women and men must be paid equally for work of equal value, have equal access to training and promotion, equal opportunities to choose working hours, holidays and fringe benefits, and enjoy the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and childcare and child services are essential;

(c) Programmes are needed to enhance occupational health and safety for women, taking differing needs in different jobs into consideration;

(d) Legislation should be developed and enforced to support gender equality and eliminate obstacles in the workplace and in societies, including measures such as quotas on Boards and more sharing of family responsibilities, for example regarding care-taking and parental leave;

(e) Creation of a level playing field includes the elimination of gender stereotypes and religious and traditional culture-based roles for women;

(f) Elimination of all forms of violence against women includes prevention of new forms such as cyber-bullying and cyber-harassing, as well as structural violence and abuse;

(g) Implementation of sustainable development measures and fair trade practices will serve to strengthen the global economy and avoid austerity measures;

(h) Development assistance programmes and countries' budgets are to be analysed, monitored and evaluated considering the female economic dimension to eliminate negative impacts on women;

(i) Training, mentoring and financial support as well as training in the use of banking systems are necessary to promote women entrepreneurs;

(j) Investment in local, regional and national infrastructure should provide women with improved, safe access to public transportation and market facilities;

(k) The needs of woman refugees, migrant workers, rural and indigenous women and women with special needs must be considered in employment policies and provision of social and health services;

(l) Research into alternative economic systems should be undertaken, including development and application of indicators to measure and evaluate the contribution of unpaid work;

(m) The essential work of women's civil society organisations must be recognised, valued and supported.

The Millennium Development Goals helped to kick start widespread development efforts that focused on improving maternal health. The Sustainable Development Goals must continue the momentum so that all women benefit equally from sustainable development — no one should be left behind.

Soroptimist International's project "Birthing in the Pacific" in Papua New Guinea was delivered in response to the countries' high maternal mortality rate and supported MDG 5 "to improve maternal health". More than 80 per cent of the population of Papua New Guinea (PNG) live in rural areas, many belonging to indigenous communities. In partnership with PNG National Reproductive Training Unit and PNG University of Medicine, 1500 health personnel undertook residential Essential and Emergency Midwifery Courses. As part of the project ninety-three community health workers from rural and remote areas were also sponsored to undertake residential midwifery courses, and 89 village birth attendants were trained. Equipment was purchased and distributed to midwives, community health workers and hospitals across the country. SI also provides annual scholarships for indigenous graduate midwives to complete their studies in partnership with the Australian College of Midwives.

Based on the success of the "Birthing in the Pacific" project, SI has experienced the importance of having a multidimensional approach to sustainable development. Improving maternal health and eliminating maternal mortality is not only about healthcare, it is also about education, transport routes, technology transfer and human rights. We have to learn

from the MDGs — to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls we must implement projects that truly recognize that these different elements of sustainable development are interlinked and indivisible.

We must also be innovative to ensure that no one is left behind. “Birthing in the Pacific” addressed a critical development need for indigenous and rural women. This project recognized the value of the traditional knowledge and experience of these women. It highlighted the need for education to be intercultural and available in different local languages.

By adapting to the needs of women and their communities the “Birthing in the Pacific” project decreased maternal mortality and improved maternal health. The project demonstrates how ensuring that women accessed their right to adequate maternal healthcare also enabled rural and indigenous women and girls to acquire skills to help themselves. This project saved lives, successfully contributing to MDG5.

To advance the rights of women and girls’ of all ages, particularly widows or female headed households, it is essential for them to be educated, economically empowered and enabled to lead safe and productive lives. It reaps enormous benefits for individuals, their communities and the economy.

Learning from the lessons from the MDG implementation, it is clear that one size does not fit all. Solutions should be culturally appropriate, and be tailored to the needs of communities. All sustainable development efforts should have a human rights-based approach. This will not only guide what we achieve, but how we achieve it. This is essential for the 2030 Agenda to be successful, ensuring that no one is left behind.