



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 December 2013

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Mothers’ Union, 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.



Statement

Mothers' Union welcomes the new post-2015 development agenda and in particular the stand-alone goal on gender. We believe there are a number of specific recommendations the Commission on the Status of Women should make in its agreed conclusions in order to refine the goals and national targets.

We have specific recommendations on goals 1, 2, 3, 10 and 11 from annex I to the Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which reflect the voice of our 4 million grass-roots members across 83 countries. They also build upon consensus reached in the agreed conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission.

Goal 1: End poverty

While many countries give women and men equal rights constitutionally to own property, in practice this is not sufficient to ensure that equality is a reality in many countries. A number of additional legal frameworks need to be in place for women to secure rights to land, property and other assets, namely, inheritance law, marital property law and land tenure law. Where customary law governs these issues, there is room for contradiction, confusion and wilful denial of rights, and consequently many women are unable to exercise their constitutional ownership rights, according to the International Center for Research on Women.

To that end, targets set for goal 1b (Increase by x per cent the share of women and men, communities, and businesses with secure rights to land, property and other assets) need to take into account the fact that women are still disadvantaged in terms of ownership rights. Setting a uniform percentage, despite increasing rights overall, will not address the inequalities between women and men, and therefore higher national percentage targets are needed for women than for men. This will also help to realize goal 2c (Ensure equal rights of women to own and inherit property, sign a contract, register a business and open a bank account).

Goal 2: Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality

Goal 2a (Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against girls and women) must be tackled universally. There is no country on earth where gender-based violence does not occur, and it is not a human rights violation that developed nations have overcome. To prevent and eliminate violence, Member States need to:

- (a) Raise awareness of gender-based violence and challenge underlying attitudes that perpetuate it;
- (b) Invest in prevention, addressing the intersecting factors that lead to gender-based violence;
- (c) Ensure provision for survivors of gender-based violence and their children;
- (d) Support rehabilitative services that change attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators, to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Goal 3: Provide quality education and lifelong learning

As with goal 1b, national targets on goal 3 need to be gender sensitive. Increasing by a uniform x per cent the proportion of children accessing and

completing pre-primary, primary and secondary education will not address current gender inequalities in education, such as in the Central African Republic, where 33 per cent of girls complete primary education compared to 53 per cent of boys, or in Burundi, where 32 per cent of girls transition to secondary education compared to 42 per cent of boys, according to the World Bank in 2011. Therefore, we recommend that at the national level higher percentage targets be set for girls than for boys.

To help to increase the proportion of girls accessing and completing education, national and local governments also need to improve the safety of girls at, and on their journey to and from, school.

Goal 10: Ensure people enjoy freedom of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to independent media and information

Freedom of speech and access to independent media are essential to democracy and development. However, we urge governments to address the violent and sexualized portrayal of women and girls through all forms of the media. Many democratic and developed States have in place statutory and/or self-regulation governing media content that balances freedom of expression with respect for gender equality and the empowerment of women. We do not believe that some regulation of the media, whether voluntary or statutory, necessarily equates to suppression of the media, and we recommend that governments put in place models of regulation based on examples of good practice.

It is also important that the Commission challenge any acceptance of the denigration of women and girls through all forms of the media, particularly in Member States where discrimination against other characteristics, such as race or disability, through the media is not tolerated.

Goal 11d: Enhance the capacity, professionalism and accountability of the security forces, police and judiciary

It is important that the police, judiciary, military and other public officials are fully sensitized and trained to deal with violence against women and girls, in supporting survivors, dealing with perpetrators and administering justice — whether during peace, in conflict or in post-conflict situations. Civil society, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations can all play an important role in this, and governments should create the space, opportunity and funding for this to happen.

Some issues cannot be easily encapsulated in one compelling message, for example, on how to end violence against women and girls, and doing so might be at the risk of ignoring the complexities or subtleties of an issue. While ensuring that the goals are widely applicable across the globe, messages also need to have a certain cultural relevance to make them easy to understand in each country.

Addressing the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality, and in particular preventing violence against women and girls, is crucial to “leaving no one behind” and ending “business as usual”. Failure to do this would not just leave behind half of the global population, it would lead to the failure of creating the transformative shift needed for the development of all humankind.