



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-eighth session

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

### Statement submitted by National Council of German Women’s Organizations, 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

The National Council of German Women's Organizations states that there has been substantial progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Several targets have already been met or will be met by the end of 2015. However, progress has been insufficient and highly uneven and has been hampered by significant inequalities related to gender, income, ethnicity, disability, age and implementation of human rights. Immense challenges remain. Strengthening of efforts is needed for accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Half of the world's population are women, but they do not have access to half of the power and half of the resources. Inequality between women and men has deepened in many countries. Too many women continue to suffer from oppression and discrimination in all areas of life, including unequal access to health and education; vulnerable and precarious employment that does not secure a self-sustained livelihood; unequal pay for equal work or work of equal value; greater risk of poverty; persistence of gender-based violence; and poor participation in political, economic and financial decision-making at the national, regional and international levels.

Among the promises made in the United Nations Millennium Declaration was a compelling pledge to spare no efforts to free all women and girls, men and boys from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of poverty. However, much to our regret, the Millennium Development Goals did not address the root causes of poverty, most especially the unequal distribution of power and resources and the structural inequality between women and men that have made it impossible for the Goals to be truly transformative. Due to the lack of a transformative agenda, women's rights and gender equality have not been achieved.

Which challenges should be addressed in the post-2015 development framework? In our opinion, this should be an inclusive and people-centred development agenda that takes into consideration the significant changes in the world since the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. It should tackle the root causes of poverty, social exclusion and inequality. The post-2015 development framework must effectively guarantee the full spectrum of women's and girl's rights and their empowerment; it should address justice, equality and equity, good governance, democracy and zero tolerance for gender-based violence as a form of discrimination rooted in historical and structural inequality of power relations that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Commitment to international women's rights instruments and other important documents should be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda, including the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences. Women's rights are human rights, and the indivisibility and universality of human rights should always be the central principles.

Reaching equality between women and men and empowering women and girls are inalienable prerequisites for a transformative agenda. Only a stand-alone goal allows space for targets and indicators that would reflect the changes needed in

order to achieve gender equality. Such a goal should also take into account the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls around the world. A stand-alone goal on gender equality and the rights of women and girls with clear gendered targets and indicators should include a coherent approach to women's rights and gender equality, with a view to promoting women's economic independence and the equal representation of women and men in political, economic and financial decision-making.

Given that gender inequality is both structural and systemic that exists everywhere from the private sphere and the community level right up to national and international institutions, such a stand-alone goal should be accompanied by a clear commitment to implement gender mainstreaming and gender-budgeting in all goals, targets and indicators of the post-2015 development agenda. Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls underpins and advances progress across all the goals. All barriers to the empowerment of women and girls in our societies have to be eliminated. This comprises the enactment and enforcement of laws that promote gender equality and the elimination of laws, policies and practices that are harmful to women and girls.

Key elements of the emerging vision for the post-2015 development agenda include sustainable development, enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship. However, an economy based solely on a credo of growth will destroy the Earth, the atmosphere and the basis of life for billions of people worldwide. The assumption underlying economic policy that growth automatically brings prosperity, or for that matter greater justice, has proven to be false. New economic strategies have to incorporate gender equality as a basic condition for change. Success will depend on profound changes needed to achieve truly equal opportunities for women and men to participate in all forms of work needed by society and to shape their communities. A sustainable economy requires a new "care ethic" or social philosophy of shared and fair care. For this, it requires a new definition of work needed by society. This work must be shared fairly by women and men and by generations. With this in mind, new models of ensuring livelihoods must be developed and introduced to enable socially responsible and self-determined decisions.

We would like to draw attention to an important point in relation to the goal of ensuring stable and peaceful societies, namely, the situation of women in armed conflicts. In armed conflicts, women's lives are often threatened and subjected to severe burden. As civilians, particularly in internal conflicts, they are in danger of being injured or killed. They can only fulfil their duties to preserve their families and protect their children under difficult and threatening circumstances. Often they are victims, especially of sexual violence, which, as stated in Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), is used as a tactic of war to "humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group". Therefore the increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict should be formulated as an important goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

We very much welcome the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development

Agenda and its proposal for five big transformative shifts. We highly appreciate the emphasis on gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and the proposal for an illustrative stand-alone goal on empowering girls and women and achieving gender equality. The implementation of the respective targets will contribute to women's economic independence and the equal representation of women and men in decision-making. We also appreciate the inclusion of the indicator on universal sexual and reproductive health and rights under Goal 4.

We demand that adequate and sustainable financing for women's rights and gender equality should be guaranteed in regional, national and local government budgets.

The post-2015 development agenda should include an independent and rigorous monitoring system with monitoring and accountability mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders. Such a monitoring system should ensure adequate opportunities to report on progress and shortcomings at the highest political level.

The post-2015 development agenda has to incorporate a much stronger participatory process that includes more civil society groups and non-governmental organizations that are focused on gender equality and women's rights. In this respect, we want to stress that in the post-2015 development agenda there should be a commitment to ensuring women's meaningful participation, nationally and internationally.

We hope to see women's rights and empowerment clearly identified within the sustainable development goals as a core priority for the coming decades.

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