

His Excellency
Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Hague, 15 July 2013

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Re: Women's rights in the UN Secretary General's report on the post-2015 development agenda

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Alliance of Women, a NGO in general consultative status with ECOSOC and a member of the European Women's Lobby, the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in Europe, gathering member organisations in 31 countries and 21 Europe-wide women's organisations and working to promote women's rights and gender equality.

We attach great importance to your report that is currently being prepared for the UN General Assembly Special Event in September 2013 on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and post-MDG framework. We see your report as a culmination of all the reports that you have commissioned recently including the Report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on post MDGs; the Report of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN); and the Report on Corporate Sustainability of the Global Compact. It is clear that your report, and the priorities highlighted within it, will play a major role in shaping the post-2015 International Development Agenda.

The three above-mentioned reports make a strong call for a stand-alone goal on gender equality. They clearly take the stand that reaching equality between women and men and empowering women and girls are a *sine qua non* condition for a transformative agenda. Only a stand alone goal allows space for targets and indicators that would most 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.

For our organisation, the post-2015 development framework must effectively guarantee the full spectrum of women's rights. As gender inequality is both structural and systemic, existing from community level right up to national institutions, such a stand-alone goal should be accompanied by a clear commitment to implement gender mainstreaming in all goals, targets and indicators of the new agenda. Moreover, adequate and sustainable financing for women's rights and gender equality should be guaranteed in regional, national and local government budgets.

As an international organization, with a European branch, we would also point out two important events that emphasize the importance of achieving gender equality and women's rights as a key

element of the post-2015 agenda. It has been proved in many reports and discussion throughout this current process that women's rights are intimately linked to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, environmental.

First of all, the high-level UNECE regional conference ***Enabling Choices: Population Priorities for the 21st Century*** took place in Geneva on 1 and 2 July 2013, organized in collaboration with UNFPA as part of the ICPD Operational Review Process of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Chair's summary¹ of this conference highlights the links between gender equality, an end to violence against women and the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. In particular, the Chair stresses the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to sexual and reproductive health services, as well as the right to access comprehensive sexuality education. The Chair also calls for zero tolerance for gender based violence and calls for measures to criminalize violence against women and girls and provide all victims/survivors of gender-based violence with access to critical services.

Related to this, the recently adopted European Union Council Conclusions on "***The Overarching Post 2015 Agenda***"² stress women's rights and gender equality: "It should also address justice, equality and equity, good governance, democracy and the rule of law, with a strong focus on the empowerment and rights of women and girls and gender equality, and on preventing and combating violence against women as essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development, as well as important values and objectives in themselves." In this document, the Council also reaffirms its commitment to international women's rights instruments, which should be at the core of the post-2015 agenda: "We remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfillment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences and in this context sexual and reproductive health and rights."

Knowing your commitment to these important concerns and considering the above inputs, we would like to encourage you to continue taking on a leadership to ensure that this broader agenda on women's and girls' rights and health and on gender equality is part of the post-2015 process by supporting:

1. **A stand-alone goal on gender equality and the rights of women and girls**, with clear gendered targets and indicators.
 - Such a goal should include a coherent approach to women's rights and gender equality, with a view to promote women's economic independence and the equal representation of women and men in all aspect of decision-making.
 - Ending violence against women should be a priority within this goal, with targets and indicators enabling real progress on women's lives.. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially in the context of human rights and the empowerment of women and girls, should also be a policy priority.


¹ <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/whats-new/view/id/51/defining-the-future-of-icpd-beyond-2014-in-eastern-europe-and-central-asia>

² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137606.pdf

2. **A cross cutting gender equality perspective throughout the post-2015 agenda:** gender mainstreaming in all goals, targets and indicators.
3. **Adequate and sustainable financing** for women's rights and gender equality should be guaranteed in regional, national and local government budgets.

We look forward to reading your report, as it will be a valuable synthesis of the most important international development priorities, and hope to see women's rights and empowerment clearly identified within it as a core priority for the coming decades.

Yours sincerely,



Mevrouw mr. L.C. Verstegen