



Methods of Work Resolution

Taken from CSW 59th and CSW 60th sessions

Introduction

The UK Civil Society Women's Alliance and the Europe and North America CSW Caucus have held consultations since January 2021 on the functioning of CSW. A survey was undertaken by NGOCSWNY of those who participated in CSW65 with over 500 responses in September 2021. The following analysis of the effectiveness of the resolutions is based on the outcomes of all of the above, including input from the Europe and North American CSW Caucus working group on Methods of Work.

Key elements cited in the two resolutions

The content of the resolutions can be roughly divided into:

1. How CSW relates to other UN processes;
2. How CSW functions; and
3. Specific roles of CSW.

1. CSW within the UN system

Relationship to ECOSOC:

- Provide a report to ECOSOC
- Participate in ECOSOC general theme with gendered lens
- Participate in other ECOSOC subsidiary bodies with a gendered lens

CEDAW:

- Link CSW to CEDAW
- Receive reports from CEDAW experts

2030 Agenda:

- CSW themes linked to 2030 Agenda
- Participate in HLPF

2. How CSW functions

Increasing the profile of CSW

- Establish Ministerial sections (to increase high level participation, increase decision making ability, encourage interaction between peer Ministers)
- Members States prepare for CSW
- Member States advertise themes and outcome

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- Link to ECOSOC and 2030 Agenda (Ref to 23 GA) - to raise status of CSW
- Link to IPU (increase involvement of parliamentarians)

Increase effectiveness of CSW

- Shorter and focused Agreed Conclusions
- Time limit to speakers
- Action orientated AC
- Highlight emerging issues
- Highlight gaps and challenges
- Highlight best practice
- Inter-active dialogues and expert panels
- Proactive role of CSW Bureau
- Work with UN Women
- Inclusion of Civil Society

Regional work

- Regions to prepare for CSW (with Civil Society)
- Regions consult on emerging issues

Administration of CSW

- Agreed Conclusions of priority theme to be negotiated
- Chair summary of Review Theme and Emerging Issue
- Review: future work & organisation
- UN Secretary General to provide reports for CSW to consult upon

3. Specific Roles of CSW

Advise ECOSOC

Policy making regarding women and girls across all UN processes

Since 1996

- Monitor implementation of BPfA
- Catalytic role in gender mainstreaming across UN
- Ensure system wide coherence across UN system
- Highlight emerging issue
- Increase public awareness of BPfA and themes

Since 2015

- Influence 2030 Agenda regarding women and girls

Effectiveness of the Resolutions

Methods of Work Resolution CSW59

PP1

Review the functioning of its methods of work with a view to further enhancing the impact of the work of the Commission.

It is determined that these actions have had a limited impact on the work of Commission on the Status of Women.

PP2 &3

CSW has the primary responsibility for monitoring the progress of the Fourth World Conference on Women as well as the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”. The organisation of work of the Commission should contribute to advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) as well as the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (GA23).

It is not possible to determine whether or not these goals have actually been implemented. However, it is recommended that in reference to the on-going work of the Commission there must include a stronger reference to the Beijing Platform of Action as well as a robust analysis of the countries’ implementation of these goals.

PP4

BPfA, GA23 and the fulfilment of the obligations of States parties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as the realisation of their human rights.

Current Civil Society perception is that there is a difference between the goals as stated on paper and how they have been implemented in practice.

It is recommended that in reference to the on-going work of the Commission stronger links to CEDAW should be made, including e.g. referring to CEDAW where appropriate in outcome documents. There is also a suggestion that the Commission be enabled to solicit the expertise of those who specialise in issues involving gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realisation of their human rights during the session.

PP5

Gender mainstreaming is a critical strategy as well as the catalytic role of CSW in its promotion is affirmed.

It appears that this critical strategy is not being implemented. Some are of the view that this strategy has had a positive result. However, many question whether or not gender mainstreaming is an effective tool to ensure equality. What is the extent of gender mainstreaming across the UN

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system? In reference to the on-going work of the Commission, the catalytic role of CSW in the promotion of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realisation of their human rights, needs to be continually highlighted.

PP6

The key role of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen) in supporting the work of the Commission is highlighted.

The creation of UNWomen is recognised by Civil Society as a positive step in the right direction however the perception is that there is still insufficient emphasis on the importance of the role of UNWomen. There is concern that UN Women is not strongly supported across the UN system. In regard to the on-going work of the Commission it is thought there is a need for greater outreach and transparency with more accountability and engagement. This is held strongly in view of the robust advocacy in which Civil Society engaged prior to its establishment. Whilst advocating for a robustly funded UNWomen, and recognizing the challenges it faces and wishing its success, many in Civil Society would appreciate more engagement with UNWomen.

PP7

The importance of Non-Governmental Organisations, as well as other civil society actors, in advancing the implementation of the BPfA and, in this respect, the work of the Commission is recognised.

It is felt that whilst the language is positive, there is little real desire amongst Member States to work with Civil Society nor is their real worth understood or recognised. Moving forward, more references to business, academia & NGOs could be included in documentation plus work with them in implementation of the Agreed Conclusions.

PP8

All subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC to contribute, as appropriate, to the work of CSW in keeping with the agreed annual theme.

This has not been implemented. It is suggested that mechanisms be established to enable the contribution of other UN Agencies to the work of CSW in addition to the usual array of side events. In addition, it is suggested that the Council look at best practices from other UN processes for Civil Society engagement. It is noted that UNWomen have undertaken consultation with Civil Society in regards to this latter point.

PP9

The elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and the relevance of the work of the Commission in this respect is noted.

This link has meant that CSW is more closely linked to current thinking of Member States. However, it can also result in the loss of focus on the goals of BPfA and CEDAW. It is suggested that the targets and indicators cited in the Sustainable Development Goals should be analysed by CSW to ensure that all those of particular relevance to women & girls are included in the work programme of CSW.

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OP 1

The primary responsibility of CSW to monitor the implementation of the BPfA is reaffirmed. In addition, it reaffirms CSW's mandate; its important role in overall policymaking and the coordination of UN implementation of the BPfA.

This reaffirmation is positive, however it is unclear whether CSW is really involved in policy making across the UN. It is also questionable if CSW continues through the year to coordinate the implementation of the BPfA across the UN. The mandate of CSW is not well known. This mandate includes:

1. Monitor implementation of BPFA
2. Highlight emerging issues
3. Ensure system wide coordination
4. Catalytic role in gender mainstreaming
5. Public awareness of all themes of BPFA

It is suggested that more attention be given to increase public awareness of the BPfA, its themes and the role of CSW, especially within specific communities, social media, training sessions and educational institutions. The agenda of CSW should include items on each point of the mandate each year.

OP2

The continued contribution of the Commission to review the 2030 Agenda was affirmed, in particular in regard to the acceleration of equality and the empowerment of women.

The themes of CSW are framed within the 2030 Agenda. However, the consultation of the Commission with Civil Society needs to be more profound. CSW could then participate in the HLPF and other 2030 Agenda processes with the view of women and girls to hand.

OP3

It was decided that the Commission would report to ECOSOC on its main theme in order to contribute to its work applying the perspective of gender equality and empowerment of women.

A report is provided to ECOSOC every year.

OP 4

This provided that sessions of the Commission to include a ministerial segment which would both reaffirm and strengthen the political commitment regarding the realization of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their human rights. To also ensure a high-level of engagement in order to increase the visibility of the Commission and include ministerial round tables or other high-level interactive dialogues in order to exchange experiences and lessons learned as well as good practices. A general discussion regarding follow-up reviews of BPfA to take place.

This has been implemented and resulted in a positive outcome as some countries have Ministers present who have held meetings with counterparts which positively influenced outcomes. Some round tables and dialogues have also included examples of good practices. However, the Beijing follow up reviews are slow and questionable. Political commitments toward CSW needs to be

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strengthened. In addition, high level interactions need to include additional members of Civil Society who would really share existing best practices as well as challenges so that there would be more of an exchange of best practices and solutions that worked.

OP5

General discussions during the ministerial segment to focus on the follow-up review of Beijing as well as identify achievements made and efforts under way in order to close gaps and meet challenges in relation to CSW themes.

This has been implemented and resulted in a positive outcome by offering a good opportunity for states to share best practices. Some States use the opportunity to make aspirational statements glorifying achievements. It is proposed that Member States include Civil Society in the creation of these presentations and, where possible, also include them in delegations which participate in delivering these presentations at CSW.

OP6

Statements made during the general discussions continue to be subject to strict time limits determined prior to the session by the Bureau of the Commission and consistently applied by the Chair.

This is being implemented.

OP7

The Commission to continue to consider one priority theme at each session based on the Beijing Platform for Action and links to the 2030 agenda.

This is being implemented. It has the positive outcome as it maintains the link between CSW and the SDGs and therefore the other commitments of Member States.

OP 8

The consideration of the priority theme to focus on how to accelerate the implementation of commitments in the context of current challenges. Expert panels could include experts from Governments, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholder groups.

This has been implemented. However, there is insufficient time for experts to address the relevant issues and solutions. It is unclear if the expert panels persuade Member States. Member States have asked for more meaningful dialogue rather than the continual use of prepared statements. Panels should include protagonists from the field.

OP 9

The outcome of the annual discussions on the priority theme to be in the form of short and succinct agreed conclusions, negotiated by all Member States with a focus on action-oriented recommendations. The agreed conclusions to be widely disseminated to the United Nations system and made widely available by all Member States to the public in their own countries so as to encourage follow-up action.

This has been implemented with a shortened Zero Draft. Negotiations have lengthened the Agreed Conclusions. As the monitoring processes are weak and have no sanctions, there is no trust that previously agreed language will be honoured. Therefore the text of the AC is lengthened to include agreed language so as not to lose the result of previous negotiations. There has been almost no publicity regarding the Agreed Conclusions resulting in most countries being unaware of the content or relevance of the Agreed Conclusions. Civil Society has not monitored or reported on whether these Conclusions are implemented in an effective and timely manner.

It is proposed that the UN strongly encourages States Parties to publicise the Agreed Conclusions' content and relevance domestically. As a model to Member States, the UN should publicise the Agreed Conclusions more and cite them in all UN processes. Civil society should be included in the drafting of the Zero Draft. The UN should establish a formal process that enables NGOs to bring expert witnesses and for NGOs to present their views on the Agreed Conclusions. This formal process to be given the equal value of a Member State intervention in negotiations & Chair summaries.

OP10

The Commissions to continue to discuss emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women taking into account developments at the global and regional levels and with attention to relevant issues on the ECOSOC agenda; in particular the annual theme of the Council.

It is thought this has not been implemented. If it had been implemented it would have resulted in a positive outcome by permitting some important emerging issues to bring new perspectives to CSW. However, by not implementing OP10, the result had been that no emerging issues had been discussed in the last couple of years. It was proposed that the UN provide a strong mechanism for Civil Society recommendations regarding emerging issues.

OP 11

The Bureau of the Commission, prior to the session, is asked to identify emerging issues, trends, focus areas or new approaches, it also requires that regional groups, and Civil Society are to be consulted regarding emerging issues, trends, focus areas or new approaches and participate in an interactive dialogue.

This has not been implemented. Civil Society should be actively engaged in any discussions regarding emerging issues, trends, focus areas or new approaches.

OP12

The outcome of discussions on an emerging issue, trend, focus area or new approach should be in the form of a summary by the Chair of the Commission after being prepared in consultation with the regional groups and members of the Bureau;

This has not been implemented.

OP13

Required the Commission to evaluate progress in the implementation of previous priority themes as well as review the presentations which dealt with lessons learnt, challenges and best practices.

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It also requested the Commission to find ways to accelerate the implementation including through addressing data gaps and challenges at the national, regional and global levels.

This has been implemented and some useful analysis and examples of best practices have been highlighted. A more rigorous form of monitoring is required to evaluate what the Commission intended to do to fulfill the goals of the priority theme under review, what has actually transpired and where there may be room for improvement.

OP 14

The outcome of the deliberations on the Review theme is a Chair's summary.

This has been implemented and had resulted in the positive outcome of providing examples of best practices. However only contributions made by Members States during the session can be included in the summary. This system is open to strong bias. It is proposed that a mechanism be introduced that will reduce the risk of bias.

OP 15

The Commission is called upon to further enhance its catalytic role for gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system including in support of the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

This has not been implemented.

OP16

All gender-specific United Nations entities and other relevant United Nations entities, including CEDAW, are invited to contribute to CSW.

This has been implemented to some extent. It is suggested that CEDAW should be more fully incorporated within all CSW activities, articles, Agreed conclusions and any resolutions. Reference to CEDAW including General Recommendations should be made. CEDAW experts should be included in all panels.

OP17

Required regional commissions to continue to contribute to the work of CSW.

This has not been implemented. The Council should create stronger mechanisms at a local, regional, national and international level which would require that State Parties engage with NGOs and other civil society actors throughout the year at a national level and annually at a regional level.

OP18

In view of the traditional importance of non-governmental organizations in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, such organizations should be encouraged to participate, to the maximum extent possible, in the work of CSW. The Secretary-General should make appropriate arrangements to ensure full utilization of existing channels of communication with non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate broad-based participation and the dissemination of information.

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The main modalities for NGO participation in CSW is limited to ECOSOC organisations. Many NGOs work hard to include other organisations in consultation processes and inclusion in their delegations. UNWomen should ensure that NGOs have more opportunities to communicate additional information to CSW with an extended deadline beyond August. The statements from NGOs with ECOSOC status are required to be submitted in October.

The UN should provide funding to smaller NGOs with ECOSOC status, umbrella organizations and those organizations which had a proven record of working with grass roots women and girls.

Webinar type virtual sessions prevent NGO interaction with Member States or other attendees at CSW, since these have been used. There is insufficient NGO participation in panels at CSW.

Some UN processes are better at engaging with NGOs. It is noted that the Bureau consulted with other UN processes and Member States in regard to different ways to engage with Civil Society. It is recommended that the Chair of the CSW Bureau consult with NGOs at least twice a year and that a mechanism should be set up for NGOs to consult with Member States on a regular basis throughout the year in order to facilitate greater participation across the regions and to provide the opportunity for Member States to be educated as to the expertise and experience of civil society. It is suggested that this be done via the regional caucus for CSW.

Civil Society suggests representation on panels throughout the CSW programme be increased and that a Virtual Vienna Cafe be established, hosted by the UN or Member States, to enable informal discussions between Member States and civil society.

Since COVID-19, the virtual CSW has enabled the number of women attending CSW to double as they do not have to bear the cost of travel, accommodation and visas.

UNWomen are very helpful to NGOs in regards to accreditation for CSW. They are also seeking greater feedback from Civil Society and have worked hard to increase implementation through the Generation Equality Forum processes. Communication procedures afford the opportunity for providing information to CSW. UNWomen disseminate information in an effective and timely manner.

OP19

Strengthen existing opportunities for NGO's to contribute to the work of CSW, including by allocating time for them to deliver statements throughout the CSW programme.

This has been implemented.

All ECOSOC organisations can submit written statements and request oral statements. UN Women is very helpful in facilitating this process. Recorded oral statements enable NGO's to have more access to CSW and its membership and virtual sessions allow more NGOs to participate throughout the CSW programme. The deadline for statements is considered to be too early. In addition, scant attention is paid to NGO statements. E.g. It was not unusual to see state Parties vacate the room while NGO statements were being shared.

It is suggested that the deadline for written statements be in December. It is also proposed that statements be read throughout the programme relating to agenda items and be listed on the web page in order of agenda item, rather than the current system. It is recommended that the CSW Bureau consult on ways to encourage Member States take note of the NGO statements rather than consider their presentation as a comfort break.

OP20

Expressed its appreciation with the continuation of the annual parliamentary meetings organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and their contribution to the discussions of the Commission as well as the programme of side events.

This has been implemented.

Parliamentarians present at CSW are able to share their expertise. However, IPU events are closed to NGOs when CSW is conducted on a virtual platform. In addition many parliamentarians have not historically been aware of CSW's existence and, as such, have not been educated regarding how to participate at CSW.

Member States should be encouraged to work in collaboration with IPU to brief parliamentarians on the protocol which NGOs and Member States were required to follow at CSW. CSW is requested to encourage IPU and Member States to enable parliamentarians to participate in NGO events.

OP21

Encouraged all Member States' delegations to consider including technical experts, planning and budgeting experts and statisticians, including from ministries, parliamentarians, members of national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors.

Some Member States now include such expertise in their delegations. Many Member States are not following this recommendation.

It is proposed that every Member States should include civil society representatives in their delegation.

OP22

Encouraged the Bureau of CSW to continue to play a proactive role in the preparations for the session including regular briefings and consultations with Member States.

OP23

Encouraged the Bureau to encourage interactive dialogues between Member States and relevant stakeholders within high-level events and ministerial and expert workshops in order to enhance the impact of CSW's work.

This has been implemented.

These events provide a high level of expert information. Civil Society found it hard to access the virtual meetings. There is little opportunity for meaningful discourse as many Member States use them as an opportunity to give prepared statements regarding Member States' work.

It is proposed that the Bureau seek to implement innovations that provide more engaging formats such as the use of breakout rooms and leading methods of facilitated discussions to achieve the meaningful exchange of information rather than aspirational statements. In addition it is also recommended that reports as well as videos of these events be widely disseminated and that tool kits be created for Member States based on best practices.

Some Member States appear to regard CSW not as a process but rather a one week endeavor after which there is little reference to CSW or the Agreed Conclusions throughout the remainder of that year.

OP24

Encouraged Governments and all other stakeholders to undertake comprehensive preparations for each session of CSW, at the national, regional and global levels, to strengthen the basis for follow-up to outcomes and implementation.

This has not been implemented.

There is little regional or global preparation for CSW. There are some examples of Member States working with civil society in preparation for CSW.

It is proposed that CSW require Ministers responsible for women and girls to meet with NGOs twice a year in order to consult with them on AC implementation. In addition, Ambassadors and Permanent Missions should meet regularly with NGOs to ensure implementation of AC as well as their integration into other UN processes including the Agenda 2030. Regional caucuses of CSW should be engaged with regional UN entities at regular intervals throughout the year to ensure women and girls across all regions are included, with such meetings being provided with relevant translation.

The creation of reports of national and regional consultations should be mandatory. This will also provide CSW with documentation in regard to these meetings.

OP25

Requests the continuation of a thematic approach and adopt a multi-year programme of work and in selecting its priority theme, CSW to take into consideration, the BPfA, GA23, the ECOSOC work programme and the 2030 Agenda, so as to build synergies and contribute to the work of ECOSOC s and the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Enables Member States link the work of CSW to HLPF/Agenda 2030 and GA and ECOSOC priorities.

Some Member States have linked the work of CSW to the HLPF, the 2030 Agenda and GA and ECOSOC priorities. Many Member States do not give CSW priority. The link between GA, ECOSOC, HLPF and CSW needs strengthening. Many Member States and NGOs are unaware of the reason for the terminology of CSW themes and the link between these different UN processes.

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The GA, SG, ECOSOC, CSW Bureau and UNWomen need to provide regular briefings for Member States to understand the context of the priority theme and to enhance linkages between CSW and other UN processes. Funding to be provided to NGOs to train civil society and national parliamentarians on this issue.

OP26

Requested that the Secretary-General submit a report on an annual basis, regarding the priority theme which includes any conclusions or recommendations for further action.

This has been implemented and the report highlights key issues for CSW and the UN. However, it is unknown what the sources are for the content of the report.

It is proposed that civil society are secured robust opportunities to send contributions to the SG's office in preparation for the report. In addition, Civil Society should be strongly engaged in the choices of expert panels for discussions prior to the creation of the SG's report.

OP27

Requested that the Secretary-General submit an annual report on the progress made on the review theme of CSW at the national level.

This has been implemented and highlights key issues regarding the review theme for the CSW and the UN. However, the source regarding the contents of these reports is not always transparent.

OP28

Requested that the Secretary-General include an annual report to ECOSOC including the impact of CSW on UN policies and programs in regard to gender mainstreaming.

This has been implemented however there is little evidence that these reports have improved the profile and voice of women across the UN. In addition, 50/50 parity had not been achieved and Member States do not appear to take these reports seriously.

It is proposed that there is a provision that objective analysis by Civil Society be funded into positive changes that have occurred at the UN as a result of CSW. In addition, research into the relevance and impact of CSW should be funded and a report based on the research's findings to be widely disseminated in order to persuade Member States of the importance of CSW. As a start they should build on studies which describe CSW as being the site of landmark achievements in global women's rights since 1946 and as having succeeded in creating a history of remarkable accomplishments even in the face of adversity.

OP29

Its future multi-year programme of work will be decided at the 60th session and there should be further review of its working methods with a view to further aligning them with the post-2015 development agenda to be adopted at the summit.

This has not been fully implemented.

There was little meaningful discussion on the Methods of Work at CSW 60, and at subsequent CSW sessions.

References regarding the 2030 Agenda have been incorporated into the themes of CSW.

It is proposed that CSW Methods of Work and organization be included as an agenda item every 4 years. This should occur during a full session rather than appearing in a SG report without any input from civil society.

Methods of Work Resolution CSW60

PP1 & 2

Reaffirmation of earlier resolutions.

PP3

CSW will continue to apply a thematic approach and allow adequate time for preparation in selecting its priority theme, taking into consideration, the BPfA and the GA23, ECOSOC programme of work and 2030 Agenda in order to build synergies and contribute to the work of ECOSOC and the high-level political forum.

This has been implemented. This encourages Member States to have an on-going vision for CSW as part of the UN processes. However, many Member States do not give due attention to CSW.

It is proposed that the Programme of work would be for 5 years, ensuring that space for emerging issues allowed flexibility to respond to current conditions. In addition, the GA & ECOSOC Presidents should meet regularly with CSW regional caucuses to ensure that women and girls from across the globe was heard and heeded.

PP4

Highlights the link between the GA, ECOSOC & CSW in playing a primary role in overall policymaking especially in the implementation of BPfA; reaffirm catalytic role of CSW mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

This has not been implemented. There is little evidence to show that CSW ensures gender mainstreaming or system wide coherence. In addition, there continues to be competition for funds between the UN entities and the work for women and girls is not well coordinated between UN processes.

It is proposed that urgent action is taken in order to ensure robust funding of UNWomen. It is also proposed that the mechanisms calling for the UNWomen to be accountable (and transparent) be strengthened by providing strong oversight by the SG, as well as to ensure the championing of coherence between UN entities and their policies and programmes for women and girls using agreed UN language at all times.

PP 5

The BPfA is central to the work of CSW however a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda will also make a vital

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contribution to its implementation and help countries maximize and track progress in order to ensure that no one is left behind.

This has been implemented to an extent. If it was fully implemented it would provide a vital link to the 2030 Agenda. There is little evidence that progress is being tracked in regard to women and girls or the link between the BPFA and SDGs.

It is proposed that all Member States report to UNWomen every 2 years on their progress with a matrix showing the relationship between implementation of CEDAW, 2030 Agenda and BPFA. Funding could be provided to Civil Society to undertake such analysis.

PP6

CSW and other subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC contribute to the annual theme.

PP7

Recognizes the importance of indigenous women and will place this issue as a focus area in its sixty-first session.

This has been implemented. It is positive that indigenous women are considered a very important contribution to CSW. This goal has not been pursued. It is proposed that indigenous women be a priority theme and become a regular agenda item.

OP1

Programme of work 2017, 2018, 2019

OP2

How to mark 25th anniversary of Fourth World Conference on Women

CSW has not made any provision for the monitoring of the BPFA as COVID created a major obstacle in accomplishing that goal. However, it is felt by Civil Society believes that there may have been opportunities that have not been fully utilized to accomplish this goal.

It is proposed that CSW 67 be used to track the progress of BPFA as CSW 64 was not successful in achieving this goal.

OP3

Contribute to HLPF.

This has not been implemented.

It was proposed that the CSW Bureau engage in consultations with regional caucuses to ensure that the voices of women and girls from around the world are heard and recorded within a report to be presented to HLPF. This report would also include the perspectives of women and girls regarding the SDGs which were the focus of the HLPF for that year.

Key Recommendations

UN

Create formal and informal spaces for meaningful participation of Civil Society;
Ensure Civil Society participates in negotiations;
UN consults with civil society;
Active regional work;
Improve monitoring (keep AC short and focused);
Bureau meet with Civil Society regularly;
Hold multi stakeholder forum on key elements of CSW including Methods of Work;
Host an event on best practice of Member States working with Civil Society;
CSW Bureau have an annual check list in order to fulfil the existing mandate of CSW;
Ensure Regional offices of UN undertake regular consultation with NGOs on emerging issue and other preparations for CSW;
Ensure regional offices undertake consultation with Civil Society in preparation for CSW;
Provide funding for NGOs to organise for CSW;
Work with private sector to improve virtual platforms;
Provide representation for those who have no state eg Kurdish women;
Statements from NGOs to be listed under relevant agenda items with oral statements taken during that segment;
More time to be given to Civil Society oral statements;
Full interpretation in all 6 UN languages and other languages where possible.

States Parties

Advertise CSW and outcomes;
Include Civil Society in delegations;
Consult with Civil Society throughout the year on themes;
Focus on women and girls at CSW not geopolitical dance;
Fund Civil Soc to train all delegations;
Implement AC;
Ensure all people have access to internet in order to access virtual opportunities.

Civil Society

Ensure delegations are fully trained;
Ensure grass roots/ marginalised voices included;
Prevent olympic of rights;
Support CSW Bureau;
Ask for specific agenda item on Methods of Work in CSW66;

Conclusion

At present we face a significant gap between what has been accomplished and what still needs to be achieved regarding women and girl's rights. We need language which modernizes the Beijing Platform for Action to meet the challenges of modern times including but not limited to creating an environment which mainstreams gender equality in economic, social, cultural and sustainable

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environmental development as well as recognizes the new challenges involving social media, online violence and the climate change crisis, while yet holding to important agreed language. CSW is facing the potential erosion of many achievements it has struggled to obtain throughout the decades. CSW presently face a reality in which “women’s NGOs face costly barriers to entry to gain ECOSOC status, attending women’s NGOs are not diverse across UN regions, and those that do participate are primarily involved in parallel off-site events during CSW formal session.” Although the 2010 CSW passed important resolutions in some areas, we find its level of representation, and responsiveness to women’s NGO policy priorities is low.” Our present recommendations are created to change this reality to enable us to once again work side by side with Member States rather than being spectators in the creation of our futures.

Analysis of paragraphs

From the two resolutions - the following could be an analysis of which paragraphs relate to each of the three themes cited at the outset of this document:

1. CSW within UN System:

59

PP: 1,2,3,4,8,9

OP: 2,3,16,17,20,28

60

PP: 1,2,4,5,6

OP:3

2. CSW functioning:

59

PP:6

OP: 4,5,6,7,8,9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29.

60

PP: 3

OP: 2

3. CSW specific roles:

59

PP: 5

OP: 1,3, 15, 25

60

PP:7

OP:1

Brief Background to Recommendations

Efficacy of CSW

The failure to implement OP11 &12 is one example which corroborates the findings of a recent 2019 study which evaluated the representation and responsiveness of the United Nations

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Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to diverse women populations worldwide. The following question was asked within this study:

“How has the CSW evolved to a system where, except for a few panels and hand-selected short prepared statements during the CSW Formal Session, on the topic of the CSW’s choice, women’s NGOs can only listen to state representatives or meet off site, away from actual decision-making?”

In its concluding remarks it concluded that that there seemed to be a schism between what NGO’s believed were important issues such as “land rights, sex trafficking, internet access for women, and the effects of climate change on women” and the agenda which States overseeing CSW followed. It concluded that while CSW was “highly representative and responsive to diverse women populations in terms of state delegation participation across UN regions. We find that the CSW is at best moderately representative and responsive to women’s NGOs. On one hand, the CSW conducts regional advance consultations, but on the other women’s NGOs face costly barriers to entry to gain ECOSOC status, attending women’s NGOs are not diverse across UN regions, and those that do participate are primarily involved in parallel off-site events during the CSW formal session. Although the 2010 CSW passed important resolutions in some areas, we find its level of representation, and responsiveness to women’s NGO policy priorities is low.”

While most of the data is from 2010, they address recent developments and studies that still focus on these issues.

PP4 It is proposed that urgent action is required in order to ensure robust funding of UNWomen.

Raised awareness

There needs to be a promotion of PR/ awareness raising activities regarding the mandate and themes of CSW within communities, social media, training sessions and educational institutions. E.g. OP9: There was also little publicity regarding the Agreed Conclusions resulting in most countries being unaware of the content or relevance of the Agreed Conclusions. Finally Civil Society did not do a thorough job of monitoring and reporting on whether these Conclusions were implemented in an effective and timely manner. It was proposed that the UN strongly encourage States Parties to publicise the Agreed Conclusions’ content and relevance domestically. In addition, the UN to also increase the publicity regarding the Agreed Conclusions content and relevance within the UN.

Monitoring implementation of BPfA

There is a need to monitor the implementation of the BPfA in order to determine whether or not its goals were being achieved.

PP4 proposes that the mechanisms calling for UNWomen to be accountable (and transparent) be strengthened by providing strong oversight by the SG, as well as to ensure the championing (or a guarantee) of coherence between UN entities and their policies and programmes for women and girls using agreed UN language at all times.

PP5 It is suggested that any new resolution included the request that all States Parties report to UN Women every 2 years on their progress with a matrix showing the relationship between implementation of CEDAW, 2030 Agenda and BPfA.

OP2 It is proposed that the new resolution includes the suggestion that CSW 67 be used to track the progress of BPfA as CSW 64 was not able to achieve this goal.

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OP 13 It is proposed that any new resolution includes clauses to ensure the Commission evaluates what the Commission intended to do to fulfil the goals of the priority theme under review, what has actually transpired and where there may be room for improvement.

OP 15 calls upon the Commission to further enhance its catalytic role for gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system including in support of the implementation of the 2030 agenda: this has not been implemented

Emerging Issues

There is a need to highlight emerging issues in order to successfully address the challenges they might present.

PP3 It is proposed that the new resolution include the provision for a 5 year Programme of Work, ensuring that space for emerging issues ensures flexibility to respond to current conditions. The regional consultation between UN Regions and Civil Society must take place regularly to ensure the input on emerging issues. Widowhood in all its forms be included as an emerging issue.

OP10 has not been implemented. If it had been implemented it would have resulted in a positive outcome by permitting some important emerging issues to bring new perspectives to CSW.

However, by not implementing OP10, the result has been that no emerging issues have been discussed in the last couple of years. It is proposed that the UN provide a strong mechanism for Civil Society recommendations regarding emerging issues.

OP 11 needs to be implemented.

Civil Society Engagement

Greater participation and meaningful exchanges between women, girls and their experts and Member States is needed not only at CSW but in other related forums.

PP3 It is proposed that the GA & ECOSOC Presidents meet regularly with CSW regional caucuses to ensure that the global voice of women and girls is heard and heeded.

OP4 high level interactions need to include additional members of civil society who will really share existing best practices as well as challenges so that there would be more of an exchange of best practices and solutions that worked; and include Civil Society in the delegations which deliver these presentations at CSW.

OP8 It is proposed that additional members of civil society should be included in panels. Also provide enough time for experts to address the relevant issues and solutions.

OP9 Civil Society to also be included in the creation of the zero draft and a formal process to be established that enables NGOs to bring expert witnesses as well as enable NGOs to present their own views on Agreed Conclusions. This formal process will be given equal value as States Party intervention in negotiations & Chair summary.

OP14 has been implemented and has resulted in the positive outcome of providing examples of best practices. However its terms also create a negative outcome by adding that contributions could only be made by State Parties and therefore has the potential of being biased

OP16 Provides for CEDAW to be more fully incorporated within all CSW activities, articles, Agreed conclusions and Resolutions. CEDAW experts to be included in all panels.

OP 17 It is proposed that the Council create stronger mechanisms at a local, regional, national and international level which would require that State Parties engage with Civil Society, in particular NGOs, throughout the year at a national level and annually at a regional and local level level.

OP 18 Some UN processes are better at reaching out and consulting with NGOs than others. It is recommended that the Chair of the CSW Bureau consult with NGOs at least twice a year and that a mechanism should be set up for NGOs to consult with Member States on a regular basis

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throughout the year in order to facilitate greater participation across the regions and to provide the opportunity for Member States to be educated as to the expertise and experience of civil society.

OP 19 Decided to strengthen existing opportunities for NGO's to contribute to the work of CSW, including by allocating time for them to deliver statements throughout the CSW programme. It is proposed that Civil Society representation on panels throughout the CSW programme be increased. It is proposed that the UN establishes a Virtual Vienna Cafe to enable informal discussions between Member States and Civil Society. All stakeholders of CSW have found the reduction of face to face interaction counter productive. Given the current uncertainties in regard to pandemics, interaction virtually may well continue to some extent. Therefore creating a space, such as the Vienna Café which provided a space for face to face informal interaction of Member States, UN personnel and Civil Society is beneficial for all stakeholders.

It is suggested that the deadline for written statements be in December.

It was also proposed that statements be read throughout the programme rather than being bunched together so States Parties would be able to listen to these as part of programme rather than as a comfort break. It was also recommended that filmed oral statements be included throughout the programme under the relevant agenda item.

OP21 It is proposed that every Member States party include civil society representatives in their delegation.

OP 23 It is suggested that innovations be made in answer to the request by Member States and Civil Society for meaningful interaction; for example more engaging formats such as the use of breakout rooms and leading methods of facilitated discussions to achieve the meaningful exchange of information rather than aspirational statements. In addition it was also recommended that reports as well as videos of these events be widely disseminated and that tool kits be created for Member States based on best practices.

In OP 24 It was proposed that Ministers responsible for women and girls meet with NGOs twice a year in order to consult with them on AC implementation. In addition, Ambassadors and Permanent Missions should meet regularly with NGOs to ensure implementation of AC as well as the integration into other UN processes including Agenda 2030. Regional caucus of CSW to be engaged with regional UN entities at regular intervals throughout the year to ensure women and girls across all regions were included. In addition, these meetings were to provide access to all 6 UN languages if needed. Finally, the creation of reports of national and regional consultations were mandatory as it provided CSW with documentation that confirmed that these meetings had occurred.

OP25 It was proposed that GA, SG, ECOSOC, CSW Bureau and UNWomen provide regular briefings for Member States to understand the context of the priority theme and to enhance linkages between CSW and other UN processes. Funding to be provided to NGOs to train civil society and national parliamentarians in this issue.(OP25)

OP26 It is proposed that spaces be created to ensure Civil Society has robust opportunities to send contributions to the SG's office in preparation for the SG report. In addition, Civil Society to be strongly engaged in the choices of expert panels for discussions prior to the creation of the SG's report.

60PP7 It is proposed that progress on indigenous women be a primary focus regarding the area of work for CSW soon and also appear as a regular agenda item.

60 OP2 It is proposed that CSW attendees also participate in the HLPF and other Agenda 2030 processes.

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60 OP3 It is proposed that the new resolution includes provision for the CSW Bureau to engage in consultations with regional caucuses to ensure that the voices of women and girls from around the world are heard and recorded within a report to be presented to HLPF. This report will also include the perspectives of women and girls regarding the SDGs, especially those focused on by the HLPF that year.

Political Commitment

OP 4 recommended strengthening political commitments toward CSW

Proposed amendments for OP20 include encouraging Member States to work in collaboration with IPU to brief parliamentarians on the protocol which NGOs and Member States were required to follow at CSW. CSW was requested to encourage IPU and Member States to enable parliamentarians to participate in NGO events.

Funding

It was proposed that PP4 be amended to require urgent action in order to ensure robust funding of UN Women.

Many NGOs require funding in order to participate fully at CSW events. The 2019 study determined that women's NGOs faced two expensive barriers to gain entry to CSW: 1. To gain ECOSOC status; 2. Physical attendance at CSW. Based on the survey, half of organizations that did not attend an earlier CSW event indicated a lack of funding as the main reason.

In that study it was observed that: "Women's NGOs with significant resources may be in a position to work with or influence the GA, CEDAW, and UN Women if the women's organizations themselves are large and well-financed to get the attention of their state delegates to the UN, or through consultative processes as members of the GA draft numerous resolutions dealing with women's rights."

According to the survey of 2010, negative outcomes included the fact that many NGOs required funding in order to participate fully at CSW events. A 2019 study corroborated this claim. The 2019 study determined that women's NGOs faced two expensive barriers to even gain entry to CSW. To begin with, NGOs faced costly barriers to gain ECOSOC status. In addition the same study determined that, even after gaining ECOSOC approval, travel costs to attend the CSW's meetings could be burdensome. Based on their survey, half of organizations that did not attend an earlier CSW event indicated a lack of funding as the main reason.

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Further thoughts on Civil Society Engagement

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The importance of non-governmental organizations, as well as other civil society actors, in advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the work of the Commission is recognized in the resolutions which created the organization and methods of work of CSW. The pursuit of gender equality is a core part of CSW's mission. Indeed, CSW is to have a catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programs.

Yet even before the COVID-19 pandemic, women and girls continued to experience gender inequality and COVID-19 has created an environment where further erosion and violation of women's and girls' rights has taken place on a daily basis.

Women and girls make up half of the world's population. Yet addressing major development challenges from the prism of gender is often discounted or even ignored. Women's front-line perspectives are not fully acknowledged and included in CSW or other relevant forums within the UN. Often presentations are created to suit the multiple agendas of Member State groups or are based on facile assumptions made from a vantage point that ignores over 50% of the world's populations needs. Rather than serving as a welcoming and supportive environment during the time of COVID-19 and the climate crisis, many women feel underserved through limited genuine participation in CSW.

Women and girls should not be regarded as a vulnerable group affected by events without having the ability to affect them in return. Women and girls are powerful, active agents whose participation at CSW in the past has resulted in remarkable achievements in human rights for the benefit of all of humanity. The actions of some Member States at CSW are perceived as attempts to ignore or silence women and girls when they try to speak or submit reports regarding their experiences and needs.

By ignoring women and girls, States have failed to incorporate, much less accelerate, a gender perspective into international commitments or into regional or national policies which strengthen gender inclusive and accountable approaches to their implementation at CSW.

In order to be a member of the UN, the State must be willing to accept and carry out the obligations contained in the Charter which include the obligation to promote universal respect for, and observance of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to sex as well as the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development for women and girls.

Over the decades, the General Assembly has continued to acknowledge these primary responsibilities or obligations and has have even adopted the commitment to "leave no one behind and bring everyone forward", including women and girls, in order to reach their goals of keeping development and human rights, "the pillars of the United Nations system", intact. Yet in 2022, all concerned individuals are still calling for equality of women and men and recognize that the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action have not been achieved in iever one country. It is therefore a question posited - are the "pillars of the United Nations" stable especially considering the continued existence of serious obstacles in the form of discriminatory behaviors, attitudes and power structures which prevent the State's fulfillment of their obligations regarding development and the complete fulfillment of a woman or girls' civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights?

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Enumerating rights without obligating States to recognize and implement them at CSW or on a community, regional, national and international level leaves human rights as a “soft legal rhetoric” without “hard legal authority” as it enables states that did not respect these rights in the first place to continue to disrespect these rights by picking and choosing which rights to observe.

It is vital that women and girls’ efforts to achieve their civil, political, economic social and cultural rights are supported and protected. Political will is required to ensure the effective protection and implementation of these human rights thereby ensuring women or girls are safe, healthy, educated, and empowered to create the future they want as well as healthier and more prosperous communities, societies, and economies.

Short introduction to CSW

Since CSW’s creation as a commission on June 21, 1946, it has been described as “the site of landmark achievements in global women’s rights.” and as such “the continued success of the CSW’s mission” has been described as being “critical”. Indeed, CSW’s achievements have included working side by side with Member States to “contribute gender- inclusive language in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, collecting global comparative data on the rights and status of women worldwide, and passing two declarations and three major binding multi-country conventions (including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW)². The CSW founded International Women’s Year and the UN Decade for Women. The CSW is also responsible for setting in motion three World Conferences on Women, monitoring the Nairobi Forward- looking Strategies, mainstreaming gender issues into UN development conferences, working on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), and developing the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly.” “Over the course of its history”, the CSW has “also played a key role in getting gender equality mainstreamed included in the UN’s policy agenda as a Millennium Development Goal and a Sustainable Development Goal. The CSW has also engendered many UN programs: increasing female rights to hold property, developing programs to end violence against women and girls, and increasing female access to education, health, and self-determination.” The CSW has achieved all of these landmark results in a United Nations (UN) framework which has not been without both external and internal challenges.

1 ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946

2 Rincker M, Henderson M, Vidigal R and Delgado D (2019) Evaluating the Representation and Responsiveness of

the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to Diverse Women Populations Worldwide. Front.

Sociol. 4:41. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2019.00041 pp 2

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4 Rincker M, Henderson M, Vidigal R and Delgado D (2019) Evaluating the Representation and Responsiveness of

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