



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Sixty-ninth session**

10-21 March 2025

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by International Alliance of Women, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

## Statement

**International Alliance of Women**, an international non-government organization founded in 1904 and holding General Consultative Status since 1947 views the events surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action with discontent. We ask ourselves what advancements could have been made if the Plan for Action had actually been acted upon to the fullest extent, instead of being largely set aside while the governments went about their business as usual. We draw attention to the missed opportunities and remaining challenges in the following areas:

### **Area # 2: Education and training of women**

Digital Literacy: Current challenge is to stimulate digital literacy of women and girls, including lifelong learning of new digital skills by women of all ages. Education and training of women are tools to help change gender stereotypes. Rather than realizing the promise of Education for every girl we see women and girls in some countries being denied educational opportunities, either because of poverty or because of a mistaken theology.

### **Area # 3: Women and health**

Reproductive Health: Challenge for Beijing +30 will be to achieve or restore women's full control over their own bodies, without regard to political, religious or abstruse scientific concepts, regarding their undesired or even dangerous pregnancy.

Reproductive Rights: Preserving, enhancing, and restoring women's reproductive rights remains a major challenge under several critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. Backsliding against women's reproductive rights must be met with strong opposition. The countries that are now moving backward on this issue are not only those struggling with war and economic crises, but also many wealthy nations whose understanding of democracy has gone awry.

### **Area # 4: Violence against women**

Human Trafficking: A current challenge in the area of Violence against Women is effectively combating the global rise in human trafficking and providing comprehensive support services to survivors. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that human trafficking is often linked with gender-based violence, with many victims suffering sexual exploitation. Effectively combating human trafficking is a crucial measure to prevent violence against women, understand the consequences of such violence, and provide more help and support to women.

Online Violence: Increasing online violence against women is a challenge that was not

foreseen to this extent in Beijing. Women experience violence online because of how they look, what they say or simply because they are women, and because the opportunity to do so exists.

The extent to which governments and institutions take binding and effective measures against online violence against women could be the focus of attention at the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the latest. It will be interesting to see whether and to what extent this challenge will be addressed at all at the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Female Genital Mutilation: Violence against Women and Girls, Non-state Torture, misinterpretation of Human Rights or confusion of cultural and/or religious rights: these are some ways to classify Female Genital Mutilation. They became an issue during the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2024: A bill was proposed in The Gambia to repeal the ban on Female Genital Mutilation which existed since 2015. This became a global alert. Yet in July 2024, before the third reading, this bill was officially rejected.

We congratulate the forces in The Gambia who succeeded in favour of women. We are aware of any tendencies to limit or impede self-determination for girls or women.

Legislation: The legislation, regardless which country, isn't made for handling violence against women. The demands of evidence are ridiculous and the women who dare testify against their husband/spouse risk to have to continue to live with him since he will not be convicted.

Lack of Shelters: There is a glaring lack of shelters and safe spaces for women and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence. In many cases, women victims have no alternative than to stay in their home, putting them in increased danger. The lack of safe spaces may account for the increased cases of femicide. Civil society initiatives should support policies that create shelters.

Violence Against Women in War: This is becoming increasing as women and their children are seen as appropriate targets of military actions. As new fronts open up all around the world, the death toll rises and the number of reported military rapes as well. We know most such rapes go unreported.

Campaigns that denounce violence against women and girls, in all its horrific forms, must come centre stage. There is currently a drive to create a global treaty in the form of a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women to eradicate violence against women and girls. If the promise of the Beijing Declaration had been kept, this would not have been felt necessary.

## **Area # 6: Women and the economy**

Unpaid Care Work - The Care Economy: By 2050, women globally will still be spending 2.3 more hours per day on unpaid care work than men. The challenge is to equalize the burden of unpaid care work and restructure the care economy to afford women the opportunities to participate in education and paid employment. The United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls will issue its thematic report on the CARE ECONOMY in 2025.

Unequal Pay leads to unequal superannuation and pensions: There is a compounding effect and women's regressive status when 'older women' is not generally recognized as arising from historical inequalities and inequities: thus, when the pension/superannuation gap is addressed (if it is addressed at all - the focus on the pay gap tends to overshadow the consequence namely the pensions/superannuation gap) this failure means that steps to redress the gap are inadequate.

Unequal Pay arises because women's traditional professions are not paid commensurate with skills and qualifications: Unequal Pay is generated in the main not by inequality in pay rates

where women work in fields previously designated 'male' or 'men's traditional work', albeit this is important. The major reason for unequal pay or 'the pay gap' arises because women's traditional trades and professions - teaching, librarianship, childcare, early childhood teaching, elder care, care work generally, welfare work, secretarial/female executive assistant work, hairdressing, nursing, etc. - are not paid commensurate with the skills and qualifications (formal and informal) required for the work. What is needed here are Work Skills Value Enquiries to carefully address the skills and qualifications in traditional women's work spheres, comparing and contrasting them to skills and qualifications in traditional men's work spheres, so as to bring traditional women's work pay rates up to and commensurate with traditional men's work pay rates.

### **Area # 10: Women and the media**

Encourage Media Outlets to Challenge Gender Stereotypes: In 2023, only 22% of the 180 top editors across 240 media brands worldwide were women, despite the fact that, on average, 40% of journalists in the 12 markets are women, according to a survey from Reuters Institute. Comprehensive laws, regulations and mechanisms (not only by States, but also through codes of conduct by multinational media corporations) are needed to promote gender balance in media decision-making at all levels, and to address online harassment, gender bias and implicit discrimination in artificial intelligence, algorithms and automated decision-making, as well as the impunity of social media corporations and advertising sectors. The United Nations and its member states to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to increase women's representation in media to 50% by 2030, and to encourage media outlets worldwide to actively challenge gender stereotypes, aiming for a larger share of stories to counter stereotypical portrayals within the next five years. Inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems in the media and stereotyping women continues unabated.

### **Area # 11: Women and the environment**

Extreme Heat: Women are disproportionately burdened physically and financially by extreme heat, facing higher health risks, such as increased rates of heat-related illnesses and preterm births, and economic challenges, including significant income loss and reduced productivity in informal sectors, due to inadequate access to cooling resources and healthcare, highlighting the urgent need for gender-responsive climate adaptation policies to protect their health and economic stability as climate change accelerates.

### **Area # 12: The girl child**

Online abuse of girls and young women: Girls and young women experience online abuse in many forms: sexual harassment, cyberbullying, impostors who are not who they say they are, and those who blackmail them with falsified photos.

Ensuring the online safety of children and young people, in all their diversity, is a shared responsibility between governments, policy makers, civil society institutions, parents, guardians, and the wider community at local, national, and global levels.

Mental health of girls: The mental health of girls faces unique challenges due to a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors. One of the many challenges in the area of girls' mental health is intersectionality: overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Girls from marginalized communities (for example, homosexual, transgender, ethnic minorities, low-income families) face compounded challenges that can exacerbate mental health issues. Intersectionality can lead to unique stressors and barriers to accessing appropriate mental health care.

The “normal” physical violence against girls has also not been eradicated, as girls are often viewed as a thing that men, and some women, may use as they see fit. Where are the states acting in the spirit of the Beijing Declaration who will step up to protect them rather than turning a blind eye to this form of “non-state torture”.

Endorsed by:

Canadian Federation of University Women

Graduate Women International]