



## **Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
December 2025

Original: Language

---

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

**Seventieth session**

9-20 March 2026

**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.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

## Statement

International Alliance of Women, founded in 1904, is a global network of women's organizations committed to advancing women's human rights, gender equality, and social justice in all spheres of life. With member organizations in over 30 countries and individual members in many more, International Alliance of Women advocates for the realization of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### A. Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls

Access to justice is fundamental to the enjoyment of all human rights. Yet, women and girls worldwide face structural, cultural, and financial barriers that prevent them from seeking and obtaining justice on equal terms with men. Weak legal institutions, stigma, customary practices, and fear of retaliation continue to silence survivors of gender-based violence, resulting in widespread impunity. Global crises such as forced migration, climate emergencies, and funding cuts further undermine legal protections

- **Family Law:** Complaints related to family law remain constant. In particular, the application of the Hague Convention often works unfairly against mothers and must be reviewed to uphold the best interests of the child and gender equality principles. The right of women to participate in the rearing of their own children should not be abridged by custom but supported by the rule of law.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** Survivors face systemic barriers when reporting and pursuing justice, including lack of trust in institutions, insufficient victim protection, and secondary victimization during legal proceedings.
- **Reproductive Rights:** Not all women and girls are ensured the fundamental right to control their own bodies. Restrictions on reproductive rights continue to limit women's autonomy and their ability to seek redress when rights are violated.
- **Economic Barriers:** The limited availability of legal aid impairs women's ability—particularly those from low-income communities—to obtain adequate representation. The rights of women to property, their own income and control over their means of production must be anchored in law so that they can afford legal services. In many countries, access to justice depends on pro bono services that are inconsistent and insufficient.

### Recommendations

International Alliance of Women calls on Member States and United Nations agencies to:

1. Review and reform international and national family law frameworks, including the Hague Convention, to ensure gender equality and prioritize the best interests of the child.
2. Strengthen legal responses to gender-based violence, including survivor-centered procedures, mandatory training for justice actors, and robust victim and witness protection measures.
3. Ensure full recognition and protection of women's sexual and reproductive rights, and integrate these rights into access-to-justice frameworks.
4. Guarantee universal access to affordable and quality legal aid, with particular attention to low-income women, migrant and refugee women, and those in rural areas.
5. Address the impact of global crises on justice systems by safeguarding funding for gender equality and ensuring that emergency responses incorporate legal protection mechanisms for women and girls.
6. Collect and publish sex-disaggregated data on legal aid, court outcomes, and barriers faced by women and girls in accessing justice.

### B. Women's Full and Effective Participation and Decision-Making in Public Life

Despite global commitments to gender equality, women remain systematically underrepresented in public decision-making across political, peace, and economic spheres. This underrepresentation undermines democracy, perpetuates gender biases, and limits the effectiveness of policy-making.

- **Peace and Security:** Women are often excluded from top-level peace negotiations and conflict-resolution processes, despite evidence that their participation leads to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.
- **Media and Stereotypes:** Stereotypical portrayals and the underrepresentation of women in media reinforce societal norms that marginalize women's voices, limiting both public perception and actual influence in decision-making processes.
- **Private Sector Leadership:** Women remain underrepresented in senior positions within the private sector. This absence silences perspectives critical for ethical business practices, equitable corporate governance, and inclusive economic development.
- **Electoral Access:** Structural barriers, such as holding elections on weekdays, disproportionately affect women, particularly those balancing outside employment or caregiving responsibilities - reducing their practical ability to participate in democratic processes.

#### Recommendations:

International Alliance of Women urges Member States and institutions to:

1. Guarantee women's representation in peace negotiations, political appointments, and decision-making bodies at all levels.
2. Promote media diversity and challenge gender stereotypes, ensuring equitable coverage of women leaders and decision-makers.
3. Implement policies for gender parity in corporate leadership, including quotas, mentorship programs, and reporting requirements on women's representation.
4. Adapt electoral systems to ensure practical access for all women, including flexible voting arrangements, accessible polling stations, and outreach to marginalized communities.
5. Invest in capacity-building programs that empower women to participate fully in governance, leadership, and decision-making roles.

#### C. Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Older Women

Older women face compounded inequalities that limit their economic security, social participation, and access to essential services. Persistent wage gaps over their lifetimes translate into smaller pensions and superannuation, leaving many older women financially vulnerable.

- **Economic Security:** The pensions and superannuation gap is a direct consequence of the gender pay gap and intermittent work patterns, particularly for women who have taken time out for caregiving or part-time employment.
- **Decision-Making and Leadership:** Ageist and patriarchal norms often exclude older women from leadership and decision-making roles, despite their experience and expertise.
- **Digital Inclusion:** The digital divide disproportionately affects older women, restricting their access to online justice systems, e-governance tools, and digital platforms for civic and community participation.
- **Healthcare Access:** Many older women lack access to medically accurate information and healthcare services to address menopausal and age-related health concerns, including hormonal treatments and preventive care.

#### Recommendations:

International Alliance of Women calls on Member States and institutions to:

1. Close the pensions and superannuation gap through gender-responsive policies, including recognition of caregiving work and measures to mitigate lifetime pay disparities.
2. Promote inclusion of older women in leadership and decision-making, actively combating ageism and valuing their contributions across public, private, and community sectors.
3. Bridge the digital divide by ensuring affordable, accessible technology and training programs that enable older women to fully participate in civic, legal, and economic life.
4. Guarantee access to comprehensive healthcare for older women, including accurate information on menopause, age-related health concerns, and reproductive health services.
5. Integrate older women into all gender equality policies, recognizing the intersection of age and gender in shaping access to rights and opportunities.

### Conclusion

International Alliance of Women urges Member States to reaffirm their commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Legal systems must serve not only the powerful, but especially those who are most vulnerable. Women and girls must have access to justice, full participation in public and economic life, and opportunities for empowerment at all stages of life. Access to justice must be inclusive, trauma-informed, and intersectional.

Achieving these objectives is not only a legal and moral imperative, it is essential for building inclusive, equitable, and resilient societies.

### Endorsed by:

Canadian Federation of University Women

Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO)

Graduate Women International (GWI)

International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF)

International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW, BPW International)

International Relations Students' Association of McGill

Make Mothers Matter

National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO)

Silver Lining for the Needy Initiative (SLNI)

Widows Rights International (WRI)

Women's Federation for World Peace

Zonta International