



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2013

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

**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 Association for Women’s Rights in Development, 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 Association for Women's Rights in Development urges the fifty-eighth Commission on the Status of Women to listen to what women's rights advocates have been saying regarding the limitations of the Millennium Development Goals in delivering progress for the lives of women and girls around the world. The Commission's assessment of the progress made to date should and could have crucial consequences for the political will, the level of ambition and the resources needed to put gender equality and women's rights at the centre of future international development agendas.

Some of the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals, set in 2000, include their failure to address the structural causes of poverty and inequality. They do not recognize or take into consideration the consequences and ongoing impact of the current global system, macroeconomic policies and financial architecture, an issue which has often derailed the potential and actual achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals were formulated without the participation of civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations. The agenda was shaped using a top-down approach in which powerful players such as Japan, the United States of America, the European Union and international financial institutions served as the central decision makers, leaving most States from the global South and civil society little space to participate, influence and determine the priorities and focus of these global goals, despite their obvious impact on those States and their people.

By focusing on national and global targets, the Millennium Development Goals mask inequalities and growing disparities at the subnational level and among specific populations, such as those discriminated against and marginalized on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, ethnicity, language, nationality, class and other factors.

Using market-led and economic growth development modelling, the Millennium Development Goals process has overshadowed attempts to bring to the global arena alternative development paradigms. The assumption was, and still is, that wealth generation is a prerequisite to progress in human development and well-being.

The principle that human rights are indivisible, integral and interrelated is not reflected in the Millennium Development Goals; instead, they are considered in isolation from one another and detached from already agreed international human rights commitments and obligations.

With regard to gender equality, the Millennium Development Goals framework is silent on key development issues such as ending violence against women, recognizing women's unpaid work and achieving sexual and reproductive rights, including comprehensive sexuality education for young people. It does not address the rise and escalation of violence being perpetuated by extremist and fundamentalist actors in the name of religion, culture and tradition, which is a growing global threat to women's rights, sexual rights and minority rights.

Women's equal access to full employment and decent work are narrowly addressed despite the inclusion of target 1.B under Goal 1 in 2005 and indicators for

Goal 3 that aimed to measure the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. The framework overlooks the fact that women are most often subjected to flexible labour markets, are overwhelmingly represented in the informal and unpaid economy and have greater vulnerability in times of crisis to job loss, limited social protection and precarious working conditions.

Nevertheless, Goal 3 has played an important role in galvanizing financial and institutional support for women's rights and gender equality. Research on the fund for Goal 3 (see the "Women moving mountains" presentation, available from awid.org) demonstrates its unique nature and its capacity to support women's rights effectively and powerfully. This speaks to the importance of allocating specific funds to the advancement of women's rights and gender justice.

Further, the Millennium Development Goals have driven some important improvements for women and girls in increasing school attendance and lowering maternal mortality in certain contexts.

However, the Millennium Development Goals present a very limited understanding of gender equality in education, and do not include a gendered analysis of the experiences of young women and girls in and out of school, particularly in terms of gender-based violence, gender-biased curricula and stereotyping.

We recognize the efforts to undertake a broad multi-stakeholder consultation to shape the post-2015 development agenda. We expect the negotiation period to continue on this path of enabling and ensuring the full participation of civil society, particularly women's rights organizations and movements. Further, the post-2015 process must establish an ambitious monitoring framework with accountability and regulatory mechanisms that allow people to take ownership of and have recourse regarding decisions that affect their lives and future.

Any new development agenda must be grounded in human rights, gender and economic justice. We urge the Commission to consider the following recommendations in its deliberations in March 2014, set out below.

1. The post-2015 development agenda must be aligned with all established human rights agreements, including women's rights and gender equality:

(a) The post-2015 process must build on existing regional and global accountability mechanisms within the United Nations human rights system such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the universal periodic review system;

(b) The development framework must recognize the crucial role women play as human rights defenders in advancing the implementation of the global development agenda, in particular in defence of the rights of Mother Earth, against violence and militarism and in the promotion and protection of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls. The framework should provide an enabling environment for women defenders to be able to carry out their work free of violence in accordance with international human rights standards.

2. Put women's rights and gender justice at the centre of development:

(a) A gendered and intersectional social analysis must be systematically incorporated into all aspects of the post-2015 development agenda for

policymaking, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting. We recommend a three-pronged approach: (i) treating gender equality as a sector-thematic area; (ii) integrating gender equality into all development goals and processes; and (iii) supporting, promoting and ensuring the participation of women's rights advocates in all development policymaking processes;

(b) Advancing gender equality requires strengthening different dimensions of women's autonomy in recognition of the intersecting and multiple dimensions of gender inequality: economic autonomy; political autonomy; sexual autonomy; freedom from all forms of violence and discriminations (including those perpetrated by the State, non-State actors, at the community level and within families); freedom of movement; political participation; and full citizenship;

(c) The enjoyment of women's rights and the advancement of gender equality should be a central and well-funded objective of development strategies, including with a focus on and specific indicators to measure shifts in entrenched power imbalances, patriarchal norms, social and cultural change, economic disparities and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities;

(d) Women should be acknowledged as key leaders and active agents in social and economic transformation, and not merely as beneficiaries and actors;

(e) Unequal power relations at home, in the community and at the global level that sustain discriminatory economic policies and practices, including the lack of recognition of the care economy and support for both paid and unpaid work, should be challenged;

(f) The broad and profound impact of a rise of extremism and fundamentalism on women's rights, minority rights and in all areas of rights-based development should be recognized. Any global development agenda must ensure strategies that can effectively challenge these regressive forces that use religion, culture and tradition to commit violations with impunity, while enhancing and supporting the efforts already under way by activists in this area;

(g) We would like the Commission to play a key role in the post-2015 development agenda, and in development policy more broadly, by evaluating progress, identifying challenges and setting higher global standards to advance women's rights and gender equality. We see the importance of this year's priority theme as a positive step in this regard.

3. Eradicate poverty from the roots:

(a) Any development process should be based on the eradication of poverty, which requires redressing inequalities and power imbalances, ensuring the well-being of peoples and the planet; reframing the role of the state; ensuring equitable distribution of wealth, services and resources; access to decent work; and sustainable modes of production and consumption;

(b) Social provisioning must be recognized as critical to development, with visibility for the diversity of unpaid work on which the economy relies.

4. Transform the unsustainable economic model and global governance structure:

(a) The market-based development model should be transformed by reformulating economic models and indicators to reflect value for people and the

planet and therefore challenge existing neoclassical, patriarchal, unsustainable and extractivist models of development;

(b) Any post-2015 development framework must be informed by the many grass-roots innovations around the world, many of which are led by women, indigenous people and young people, that are based on the values of human rights, environmental sustainability, solidarity and collective well-being.

5. Ensure global policy coherence and policy space at the national level:

(a) Ensure that development, fiscal and macroeconomic policies, particularly those related to aid, financial regulation and trade, are aligned to national development plans, internationally agreed development goals, human rights and environmental standards and obligations;

(b) Ensure that there is enough policy space at the national level for States to determine national priorities and agendas grounded in international human rights and environmental sustainability and recognizing the right to development and diversity. Financing for development should go beyond official development assistance and advance women's rights and justice;

(c) While donor Governments must meet their obligations that official development assistance constitute 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), new mechanisms for financing for development need to be put in place, replacing the problematic aid and debt system with one based on respect, solidarity, equity, inclusion, non-subordination and justice for all;

(d) Donors from all funding sectors, whether private or public, need to establish clear, measurable, and time-bound gender equality and women's rights objectives and put in place accountability mechanisms for resources allocated, disbursed and implemented and provide data on the results of their financial support in terms of the types of social, economic, cultural and political transformations generated;

(e) In order to foster positive and sustainable change in women's lives around the world, it is important to ensure that women's rights organizations' creative strategies and close connection to local and grass-roots women's concerns are at the forefront in guiding and shaping funding strategies. Research shows that even as individual women and girls are receiving growing attention from the donor community, there is a lack of support for sustained, collective action by feminists and women's rights activists and organizations that have been at the centre of women's rights advances throughout history (see the report entitled "Watering the leaves, starving the roots", available from awid.org).

6. Ensure a robust monitoring framework and multiple accountability:

(a) Apply a "multiple accountability" approach and hold development actors accountable in relation to financing for development, women's rights and gender equality based on human rights, and environmental standards and agreements. This includes the accountability of non-State actors and the need for regulatory frameworks for the corporate sector and public-private partnerships;

(b) Go beyond existing indicators (such as GDP) so that diverse communities can claim their own indicators of well-being and sustainability that are

responsive to their realities and rooted in the socioeconomic condition of each nation (and are still in line with universal human rights commitments).

7. Reform the international financial architecture:

(a) Reform international financial institutions so that their guiding framework is not about imposing neo-liberal economic policies and maximizing economic growth, but about advancing human rights and international solidarity as part of more equitable and appropriate global economic and financial systems;

(b) Further, democratize these institutions and ensure participation in decision-making of all States regardless of their economic power and the participation of civil society;

(c) Address global financial instability and global inequalities, odious debt and unjust tax systems through a human rights and development lens.

8. Ensure greater participation of women's rights and feminist organizations:

(a) There needs to be more participation of civil society in decision-making processes related to the post-2015 development agenda;

(b) Ensure that women and feminist groups are formally part of stakeholder forums. In particular, formally include women and feminist groups in the finance committee related to the sustainable development goals and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

We reiterate the commitment of the Association for Women's Rights in Development to working with the Commission to strengthen collective learning and bring ambitious proposals to the table with our fellow women's rights advocates.
