



## Economic and Social Council

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### 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 United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, 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 United Methodist Church has been engaged in the work of the United Nations for peace and development since its founding. Through our United Methodist Office for the United Nations we were active in supporting petitioners for decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s. We engaged in discussions for a New International Economic Order in the 1970s up through the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002. In October 2013 we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Church Center for the United Nations, owned and operated by United Methodist Women, with the presence of Nobel laureate José Ramos-Horta and leaders from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Church Center for the United Nations has provided and continues to provide a space for civil society to advocate for peace, gender equality and sustainable development.

We work globally to support women, youth and children through direct service and advocacy. We have been strong advocates for the Millennium Development Goals and have supported these efforts through programmes to educate women and girls, economic empowerment projects, a global focus on the eradication of hunger and poverty, maternal health and a Church-wide initiative on preventing malaria. At the same time, we have had major concerns about the framing of the Millennium Development Goals that we hope the post-2015 development agenda will address.

The Millennium Development Goals do not use a rights-based framework or establish clear State accountability for promoting and protecting all human rights. They reduce the significant rights and development agenda of the 1990s world conferences to minimalist goals and target only developing nations. Yet the international and national policies of developed nations are critical to peace, human rights, gender equality and sustainable development

The Millennium Development Goals do not address the diversity of people's lived experiences and their differential ability to claim rights, particularly with respect to their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and national origin.

Finally, the Millennium Development Goals give great weight to public-private partnerships, even as these have contributed to the privatization of services. Privatization of services has undermined the right to health care for all persons and the right to accessible housing and education, with a particularly negative impact on women. The shared responsibility of wealthy nations to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals was reduced to goal 8, leaving out what can be measured ("measureables") or accountability.

In his report, "A life of dignity: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015" (A/68/202 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General states that "sustainable development, enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship, must become our global guiding principle and operational standard" (para. 9) and that "ultimately, the aspiration of the development agenda beyond 2015 is to create a just and prosperous world where all people realize their rights and live with dignity and hope" (para. 73). These are indeed welcome goals.

We believe that sustainable human development cannot be achieved by tinkering with a failed development model. We are at a moment of global crisis on many fronts. We are threatened with climate crisis as the world experiences the effects of drought, floods and intense storms with rising food prices and displacement of peoples in their wake. We are seeing a proliferation of war and conflict over a nation's resources that are fed by external players and weapons suppliers. The world continues to reel from a global economic crisis born of the deregulation of global financial markets, speculation and fraud. While poor nations are asked why they have not done more to eliminate poverty, rich nations have set the policies that precipitated a global recession that has devastated economies around the world and contributed to political instability as well.

It would be disingenuous to create development goals that ignore the profound disparities in wealth and power within nations, within regions, between men and women, and between the Global North and South. We must also address the growing power of transnational corporations that can surpass that of nation States. Global development goals should not focus primarily on poor people or poor nations but rather should identify the forces that make them poor and hold those forces accountable. This means challenging those who monopolize wealth, resources and power.

These macro forces have particular impact on women and girls given their second-class citizenship in most countries, their lack of access to education, their role as unpaid caregivers and their relegation to some of the most exploited work in the paid labour force. Macroeconomic policies that undermine social protection and public services mean longer hours of unpaid labour for women and girls; lack of access to critical health care, including sexual and reproductive health care; lack of access to food and clean water; marginal housing; job loss or work intensification; and, increasingly, migration to urban areas and across borders in search of work. When storms come or conflict erupts, women and children are dislocated and there is a greater probability of gender-based violence.

Any new development agenda must be set on the following foundations:

(a) **Centrality of human rights:**

(i) The agenda must be framed in terms of human rights. People should be seen not as beneficiaries of services but as bearers of rights. Rights should not be seen as means towards economic growth but as an intrinsic value;

(ii) The agenda should focus on the obligation of all States to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights;

(b) **Redistribution of wealth, resources and power within and between wealthy and poor nations.** The agenda should:

(i) Regulate global financial transactions that have fed global economic crisis and create a financial transaction tax to finance development;

(ii) Challenge the policies of international financial and trade institutions that deepen inequalities and undermine the potential for sustainable development in poor countries;

(iii) Create specific goals with clear measurable outcomes to address imbalances in terms of trade, trade pacts, profit repatriation, capital flight,

brain drain, debt, tied development aid, land-grabbing and other factors that lead to massive outflows of capital from developing nations, undermining meagre development efforts;

(iv) Include a goal on food and nutrition security that promotes rights-based, sustainable approaches to food production, consumption and food and water security;

(c) **Climate change addressed with common but differentiated responsibilities among nations.** The agenda should measure and limit national output of carbon emissions that contribute to climate change;

(d) **Disarmament and redistribution of military budgets to public services.** Development must be linked to disarmament and demilitarization, from small arms to nuclear weapons, with the full and equal participation of women;

(e) **Public accountability.** The agenda should contain measures to regulate private enterprises in order to counteract irresponsible environmental, social, financial practices;

(f) **Gender equality.** The agenda should:

(i) Address historical discriminatory practices, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health for all women and ensure that women are in decision-making positions;

(ii) Include a specific goal on empowerment of women and girls and gender equality while integrating a gender perspective throughout every aspect of the development agenda;

(iii) Rather than seeking to integrate particular groups (women, youth, migrants, etc.) into a failed development model in the name of equity and inclusion, provide opportunities for these groups to claim rights and be decision makers to shape an agenda for human development that puts people first;

(iv) Recognize the specific realities of women and girls in all of their diversity, including race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity, age, religion, marital status, national status, ability and other factors that create additional obstacles to realizing rights, and create specific policy mechanisms to address these disparities;

(v) Ensure that financing for development includes funding to civil society, including women's organizations in all their diversity, where women are decision makers in shaping the agenda;

(vi) Make sexual and reproductive health a priority of justice, with adequate funding for education and health services;

(vii) Recognize that violence against women goes beyond physical violence; that it is built into social, economic and political institutions and structures and is linked to inequality; and that States have a responsibility to prevent such violence;

(g) **Democratic processes protected at every level of society from family to international forums.** The agenda should affirm democratic practices that go beyond elections to include all actors in decision-making, particularly women and

girls. There must be transparent decision-making and real accountability, including private-sector accountability, to the public through State regulation;

(h) **The Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO)**. The agenda should affirm the ILO Decent Work Agenda, which respects the rights of workers and ensures adequate social protection, with clear State accountability. Governments must set this foundation; corporations or banks cannot and do not set it.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with the United Nations in shaping a post-2015 development agenda. We will continue to provide services to strengthen women's human rights and women's equality as we work towards sustainable human development. We call for honesty about the causes of current crises and an open, participatory process to address global inequities. Most of all, we stress the role of States in fulfilling rights, including women's human rights, and we commit to being advocates to make this a reality.

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