



## 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 International Council 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.



## Statement

The International Council of Women is a global non-governmental organization founded in 1888 and represents millions of women in over 60 member countries.

As one of the foremost organizations promoting worldwide female empowerment, the International Council of Women has always recognized that the contribution of women and girls is essential to achieving sustainable development. Our triennial theme for 13 April 2012, “Caring for Women is Caring for the World”, aptly states our position.

Our work emphasizes the potential of women and girls as leaders in science and technology and highlights what women and girls are doing to support their communities economically.

Numerous workshops and seminars held by our affiliated societies show that, despite overall progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it is clear that women are disproportionately shut out from sharing in those gains.

Despite improvements in education and literacy rates, women and girls constitute the vast majority of those lacking basic reading and writing skills. Moreover, women from poor rural areas are much less likely to have access to primary education.

Even in regions experiencing growth and stability, wealth disparities and social inequality continue to pose obstacles to the realization of gender equality in the workplace — particularly in the fields of science and technology.

Furthermore, lack of security disrupts communities on which women rely and undermines their liberty to pursue education and other means of self-development.

The failure to train and educate women and girls severely constrains the development of the community at all levels — economically, politically, socially and culturally.

We urge the Commission to accelerate efforts to give women and girls greater equality in all sectors of life and at all levels of decision-making. We believe that gender equality is crucial to sustainable development. Only when women participate in high-level decision-making can they exert their influence to bring about the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls and the world.

We urge the United Nations to advise all Member States to take positive measures to achieve 50 per cent/50 per cent representation at all levels of political and commercial life. Women’s 50 per cent participation in working towards environmental sustainability should be guaranteed in all States.

The International Council of Women strongly believes that the completion of secondary education for girls is the key to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality rates, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental stability and achieving a global partnership for development.

More national, regional and international resources should be assigned to girls' education and to encouraging them to advance into the fields of science and technology.

We call upon governments to increase funding and support for schools and teachers. Greater incentives should be provided to encourage high-quality teaching staff. Gender-sensitive administrative practices should be introduced to encourage increased female attendance at school.

The International Council of Women is concerned at the continued practice of child marriage and inhumane cultural practices and human trafficking in many parts of the world, practices which are not prevented by their respective governments.

We urge the United Nations, regional organizations and national governments to take concrete measures to eradicate such abominable practices. The United Nations should further urge Member States to strengthen penalties for all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, sexual violence and trafficking. And governments should improve the safety and security of women and girls by increasing the capacity of local authorities to investigate and punish such crimes.

The International Council of Women urges governments to take active measures to guarantee women's access to full employment and decent work. All Member States should introduce equal employment legislation. This should be accompanied by childcare and maternal health policies to aid women to take part in paid work as well as work in the home.

Domestic work should be recognized as a valuable contribution to society, and the equal distribution of domestic responsibilities between men and women should be encouraged.

Access to social welfare services should be available to relieve poverty, which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls. Existing gender equality can be exaggerated by increased project development, which accelerates environmental degradation, socioeconomic disparities and worker exploitation.

International financial institutions should adopt gender-sensitive approaches to lending and investment and implement codes of conduct to improve transparency and accountability for the effects of their projects on local communities.

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