



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-ninth session

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**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”**

### **Statement submitted by International Council of Women/Conseil International des Femmes and International Federation of Business and Professional Women, non-governmental organizations 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

Project Five-O is concerned with vocational and other training for women and girls in developing countries and countries in transition. The object of Project Five-O is to use the skills and expertise of the members of the participating organizations to support training courses in income-generating skills, including employment and working skills, marketing and small business operations, accompanied by training in health, nutrition, hygiene, child care and literacy.

The member organizations, International Council of Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, fully support the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and strive to see that the recommendations of the twelve areas of concern are implemented. In doing so, we acknowledge the continued relevance of the document twenty years after the Fourth World Conference on Women. We welcome the twenty year review but are opposed to any weakening of language that the forward-thinking women of 1995 laboured hard to gain. In particular, we support nothing less in the definition of the “family” nor with a woman’s control over her body, especially with reproductive rights. However, we are concerned that, due in part to the lack of political will, improvements in maternal and child health have been slow, and we urge States to improve their health care systems and delivery without delay, extending the provisions to women of all ages, regardless of their status.

As the Millennium Development Goals reach the target date, we are pleased to note considerable progress has been made in most areas such as universal primary education and the alleviation in the rate of extreme poverty. We look forward to the adoption of the Post-2015 Agenda with the creation of new Sustainable Development Goals and in this context we advocate the following strategies and actions in order to achieve gender equality:

Through Sustainable Development projects such as those overseen by Project Five-O and those run by the International Council of Women, women and girls are given the opportunity to enhance their general well-being and status within their communities. One such programme, currently being overseen by Project Five-O, is the support of a co-educational school in a disadvantaged area of Karachi. Here, the students learn mutual respect for one another; the girls receive the same education as the boys, equipping them to enter the world as equals. Good quality education of girls is essential.

Education and health are essential to the economic empowerment of women, which is vital to the success of business, community and government as well as to sustainable development. Women still face barriers including lack of access to natural resources, finance, property and markets. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women advocates that governments promote the acceptance of the United Nations Global Compact Initiative Women’s Empowerment Principles by companies and by government as an employer itself to create safe industries, as for example in the garment industry, with living wages and equal treatment for all, including migrant women, both documented and undocumented.

We strongly recommend that Governments create legislation to improve the economic independence of women as a condition for equality between women and men throughout their lives, emphasising that it must include, among other

characteristics: equal employment in the formal economy, equal gender pay, pension, poverty alleviation strategies, accessible and affordable care, social and health services, generous maternity leave benefits, and child care.

We advocate for the implementation of the International Labour Organization Decent Work Agenda and initiatives derived from it, with gender equality as a cross-cutting objective.

In the private sphere we believe that it is important that there be gender balance on boards of private and public corporations alike, and we encourage Governments to enforce such balance and implement at country or regional level appropriate and binding measures to increase the number of women on boards in decision-making positions by 2020.

The International Council of Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women remain concerned at the discrimination and violence, in all forms, that women and girls suffer, which is a gross violation of their Human Rights. We strongly urge that States enact legislation to prevent this violation and punish the perpetrators, in keeping with International Conventions that work towards gaining true gender equality. We urge the universal adoption of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women together with its Optional Protocols, and without reservations. We also maintain that careful enforcement of the Women's Empowerment Principles will prevent violence and sexual harassment of women in the work place and signal possible domestic abuse so that it can be properly addressed and remedied.

Only when women have achieved true equality in education and training, have safe and healthful environments in which to work in both the formal and informal economy and have both opportunity and access to all resources in a sustainable context will they be truly free to develop to their fullest capacity.

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