



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
28 November 2014

Original: English

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

**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 Non-Governmental Organizations Coordinating Committee and Young Women’s Christian Association, 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

The Non-Governmental Organizations' Coordinating Council and the Young Women's Christian Association are non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. We are dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and as such, we hail the 59th session of the commission on the status of women whose priority theme is to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 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 national, regional and international development agendas in light of the discussions around the post Beijing+20 agenda.

We have come a long way since 1995 and this journey has yielded both positive results and has also been hampered with a number of challenges in addressing the critical areas highlighted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Some of the positive results include the international and regional human rights instruments that called for commitment from Member States to address various issues such as ending violence against women and girls, promoting participation of women in decision-making positions, eliminating poverty and promoting women's economic empowerment, promoting access to education by women and girls, promoting realization of civil and political rights and promotion of access to health especially reproductive health services and rights.

We, the Non-Governmental Organizations' Coordinating Council and Young Women's Christian Association, have taken practical steps to address the twelve critical areas identified for action by ensuring that we hold duty bearers accountable for the commitments made at international and regional levels so they are translated into action through lobby and advocacy. Other initiatives undertaken include the following:

- o Tracking of the National Budget to analyse expenditures that respond to operationalizing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- o Advocating for gender sensitive and responsive legal and policy framework;
- o Promoting women's participation in political decision making by advocating for affirmative action and quota system in political party constitutions and manifestos, training female candidates and supporting them during their campaigns;
- o Promoting access and retention of the girl child in school by providing educational school support for orphans and vulnerable children;
- o Creating safe spaces for girls to equip them with life skills to reduce their vulnerability to vices that include violence against women and girls as well as other sexual reproductive health violations; setting up of centers and temporal protective shelters where women and girls can access therapeutic services when they experience any form of violence against women;
- o Economic empowerment of women and youth through training in entrepreneurship, business and financial management; encouraging linkages

and market opportunities for small and medium enterprises; establishing social financing; organizing small-savings schemes; and

- o Formation of participatory forums where women and children can have a say in matters that affect their lives.
- o Engaging men and boys as agents of change in bringing about gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls.

Despite the above efforts put in place for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Plan, we note that on the part of governments, there is a disconnect between the instruments and conventions that have been signed at international and regional levels in relation to actual implementation. The majority of the international and regional instruments have not been fully domesticated into national laws and therefore cannot be implemented in order to bring about the needed policy changes and subsequently change in the status of women. Some of the challenges include governments' 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 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In this context we hope that at the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, will consider the various realities and contexts of women and young people, especially in Africa where there are wide gender gaps in all spheres of life. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and a fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. However, this can only be achieved if women are socially and economically empowered and by removing all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

As we reflect on the journey we have undertaken since 1995, it is our contention that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is still very relevant and indeed any development pursuits world over should take its provisions as minimum parameters if we are to ensure sustainable development. We therefore urge the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women to listen to what women's rights advocates have been saying regarding the operationalization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in delivering progress for the lives of women and girls around the world.

We recognize the efforts to undertake a broad multi-stakeholder consultation to shape the post Beijing+20 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 Beijing+20 agenda 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.

Lastly, we wish to reiterate the importance of ensuring practical recommendations are included in the outcome document of the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women for achieving women's empowerment and

gender equality. The discussions at this commission should not only end in having a good outcome document but this should go further to translate into tangible action with corresponding resources to make these commitments a reality. This will require time, resources and work, recognizing that a permanent and ongoing effort will be needed to restore the social fabric and to encourage citizen participation, education and changes in thinking for human development.

Moreover, in pursuit of the post Beijing+20 agenda, we want a guarantee that there will be mechanisms for monitoring, which will include objectives, targets and indicators for evaluating impact. All interventions should be disaggregated, sufficient, pertinent and timely, in which progress being made in empowering women and attaining gender equality will be considered as a critical theme and as a fundamental part of human rights and development of the individual. Governments must ensure that these processes are applicable to all players involved.

We highlight the distinguished role of the Zambian delegation in the negotiations for moving forward with the national efforts being made in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. We also wish to recognize the political will so far shown in operationalizing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action even though much still remains to be done. We hope that this process will have a global impact for further progress in the recognition of women's human rights and the attainment of gender equality.

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