



## Economic and Social Council

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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 Pacific Women’s Watch (New Zealand), 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand), in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2010, works for gender justice and equality for women and girls across all ethnicities. The organisation plays a major role in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action, outcomes of the General Assembly and other United Nations programmes for action, with a mandate to make the voices of Pacific Island women heard more loudly at the international level. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) has coordinated and written the Aotearoa New Zealand non-governmental organisations' country reports for the ten and fifteen-year reviews of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The concerns of indigenous women, Pasifika women, disabled and refugee women were sought through national workshops, discussion groups and a questionnaire to assess how women were faring in their everyday lives. Recent research for the twenty-year review has enabled Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) to establish a longitudinal measure charting challenges and opportunities for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of New Zealand women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda through the integration of a gender perspective.

## **Progress on implementation since 1995**

Women in Aotearoa New Zealand celebrated the gaining of suffrage in 1893, a world first for any country, as a milestone for their human rights and empowerment. Fundamental challenges however, still persist in their everyday lives 120 years later. Equal pay with men, reducing the very high level of domestic violence and access to leadership roles are three ongoing critical issues with which all concerned are still grappling. Implementing the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing in 1995 has been the catalyst for both government and civil society to push for full gender equality and empowerment for New Zealand women and girls. Despite the will to succeed progress has been negligible.

In all of our reporting for the ten and fifteen-year reviews of progress on the Platform for Action five issues have stood out. In Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) reports to the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2008 and 2012 and to the Human Rights Council for New Zealand's Second Universal Periodic Review in 2014 the same issues were highlighted. They were: the male/female pay gap differential; unresolved discriminatory workplace issues; high levels of domestic violence; the continuing impoverishment of families; the health and welfare of elderly women, women with disabilities and ethnic women and girls.

In 2014 data gathered for the Beijing + 20 review in nationwide workshops, discussion groups and a sampling of Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand)'s questionnaire "How are We Doing" has revealed clearly that these same core concerns remain unresolved. Much will and effort has failed to effect real progress. This lack of progress can only be overcome through a robust post-2015 programme for gender equality and empowerment for New Zealand women and girls.

## Post-2015 development agenda

The post-2015 development agenda must aim to build strategies which will result in effective progress. This demands a different approach. Time bound targets and measurable outcomes with ongoing monitoring and analysis of the results will be basic to success. Pushing for full gender equality and women's empowerment through constant monitoring and reporting of progress on the targets and outcomes will take us forward.

Post-2015 more effective implementation demands that the New Zealand Government takes up for action all of the observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2012 and the outcomes of New Zealand's Second Universal Periodic Review, 2014. A key point raised and recognised in both reviews is Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand)'s call for a new five-year National Plan of Action for New Zealand Women and Girls. There has been no action plan since the earlier five-year plan ended in 2009. The Committee drew the New Zealand Government's attention to the inadequacy of targets and benchmarks to advance women's rights. An action plan, in providing a framework and targets in a timed agenda for progress, and which serves to coordinate intersectionality across all those involved in delivering the outcomes, will remedy this inadequacy. Alignment is essential with New Zealand National Plan of Action for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Without such frameworks timed outcomes cannot be guaranteed.

The Committee raised other concerns. These included inadequate action to disseminate and promote the Convention to Parliamentarians, Government Ministries, the Judiciary, Police, the community and civil society organisations. In 2013 Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) produced an information leaflet for widest distribution designed to be understandable for people of all ages and ethnicities. We are confident that the leaflet will continue to be a valuable tool for the post-2015 empowerment of women. In the post-2015 development agenda a key element will be education for action. All organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council have a prime role to play here.

The Committee also noted with concern the closure of the Pay and Employment Equity Unit in the Department of Labour as well as Ministry of Women's Affairs lack of consistent policy for bridging the persistent wage gaps between women and men. Post-2015 firm and consistent strategies for women's economic empowerment must be put into place to tackle the wage gap. We call for increased resources for the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure the full and effective development of a work programme to close the gender pay gap. Sharing of best practice in closing the gender pay gap, an issue of concern almost without exception in all Economic and Social Council member states, must be an agreed outcome from the 59th session of Commission on the Status of Women.

The Committee urged the New Zealand Government to establish a Human Rights Select Committee in Parliament "to strengthen Parliamentary oversight". Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand), in its leading role since it established the National Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations to be a "ginger" group for further progress to implement the Convention, took a submission early in 2014 to the Business Committee of Parliament requesting the establishment of a Human Rights Select Committee. We continue to pursue this vigorously. Defining new

strategies to make progress on gender equality and women's empowerment will also be the way forward in the global context post-2015.

To date the government has shown little will to take action on the Committee's recommendation to revise the legal minimum age of marriage to 18 years without any exceptions for parental consent. Our November 2009 petition to Parliament on the subject of forced and underage marriage became stalled as other work took priority. We urge the government to make forced and underage marriage a priority for targeted legislation. Dowry and trafficking which have such devastating effects for women and girls worldwide thrive on outdated legislation.

The Committee also recommended the collection of appropriate data to close gaps in information on domestic violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence, as well as requesting data on the wide range of gaps on disabled women, migrant women, violence against Maori women.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) brought nine recommendations in its submission to the Human Rights Council pre-session Working Group in January 2014 for the review of the New Zealand Government's second Universal Periodic Review. Specific concerns were decent housing for families and improved health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, intersex and queer communities.

Post-2015 we call for action on government proposed initiatives for disabled women, more support and information for migrants, services which are culturally appropriate for all ethnicities and more training for the Police in handling of violence against ethnic women.

The concerns for New Zealand women and girls are mirrored in many other states. We therefore urge the outcome statement from the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in proposals for the Post-2015 agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment to target: the will by all actors to succeed in full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action; unfulfilled aspects of the Millennium Development Goals; eradication of poverty; equal pay with men; zero tolerance of domestic violence; decent housing for all women and girls; full health and welfare for elderly women, disabled and ethnic women and girls. In the twenty-first century these demands are non-negotiable.

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