



## 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 African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, African Women’s Development and Communication Network, All Pakistan Women’s Association, Alliance for Africa, Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha, Canadian Federation of University Women, Centre for Human Rights, Coalition against Trafficking in Women, sénégalais des Africaines pour la promotion de l’éducation relative à l’environnement, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, German Foundation for World Population, Equality Now, European Women’s Lobby, Federation for Women and Family Planning, Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya, Femmes solidaires, Foundation for the Development of Knowledge Suma Veritas, Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida, International Alliance of Women, International Centre for Research on Women, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Moremi Initiative for Women’s Leadership in Africa, Mothers Legacy Project, National Council of Women of Canada, National Council of Women of the United States, Netherlands Association of Women’s Interests, Women’s Work and Equal Citizenship, Parliamentarians for Global Action, Research Centre for Feminist Action, Servitas Cameroon, Society for International Development, Soroptimist International, South Sudanese Women Christian Mission for Peace, Union Women’s Center, Women in Law and Development in Africa, Women’s World Summit Foundation, World Federation for Mental Health, World Mission Foundation, World Young Women’s Christian Association and Young Women’s Christian Association of Nigeria, 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.

14-64731 (E) 041214



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## Statement

Girls' rights are human rights. Girls must be allowed to grow up to become women with all their rights promoted and protected by law. Comprehensive, non-discriminatory legal frameworks, based on international human rights law and standards, are the necessary foundation for gender equality.

In 1995, in the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing, 189 Governments agreed that laws that discriminate against women and girls undermine equality and pledged to "revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex". Yet 20 years later, inequality, even in its most overt form, has not been vanquished. In 2000, the General Assembly reviewed the Platform for Action and established a target date of 2005 for the revocation of discriminatory laws. This target was far from met.

The year 2015 marks both the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Goal 3 of which includes the promotion of gender equality. As women's rights, human rights, development and civil society organizations, we know that without good laws and access to justice, women and girls have no formal recourse to protect and promote their rights and cannot fully participate in society. Legal equality, at a minimum, gives women and girls an equal opportunity to build up their capabilities and realize their hopes and dreams. Legal equality is an essential component for meeting current and future internationally agreed upon sustainable development goals for the greater inclusion and prosperity of all.

Although there has been progress around the world in removing discrimination against women and girls from the law, too many sex-related discriminatory laws remain in force and new discriminatory laws are still being adopted. In anticipation of fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, at which Governments' implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will be reviewed, Equality Now's updated report entitled "Words and deeds: holding Governments accountable in the Beijing +20 review process" (available at [www.equalitynow.org](http://www.equalitynow.org)) highlights a small sampling of these laws with regard to violence against women and girls, personal status, economic status and marital status that still remain in force, denying women and girls the fundamental right to equality.

Together, we urge each Member State to continue in its efforts to repeal or amend all laws that discriminate on the basis of sex as soon as possible. Taking action now would improve the lives of women and girls and their communities, as well as demonstrate respect for the commitment made in Beijing and renewed in 2000 at the special session of the General Assembly, and in the many other treaties, declarations and statements recognizing and affirming sex equality as a fundamental human right. Governments should also commit to promoting both gender equality and the rule of law with comprehensive goals, targets and indicators throughout the new post-2015 sustainable development framework.