



## **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 World Evangelical Alliance, 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

As noted by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, “We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity before us”. At this critical juncture in history, we are not only celebrating 20 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995, but 2015 also marks 70 years since the founding of the United Nations. Moreover, the Member States that gathered on the sidelines of the Climate Summit, held in 2014, and that will meet at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Paris in September 2015, are currently working with a view to adopting the next development framework, known as the sustainable development goals, this September.

Multi-stakeholder partnership is crucial to achieving the goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Particularly, civil society must continue to work in tandem with Governments, United Nations agencies and the private sector. However, we would like to draw attention to one particular group of stakeholders that is often overlooked: faith-based organizations. Faith groups are crucial partners, since many faith leaders are the pillars of societies all around the world. Faith leaders play a role in maintaining international peace and security, promoting human rights and fostering development; all of those areas are interconnected and interlink with gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

World Evangelical Alliance exists to foster Christian unity. Established in 1846, it is a network of churches that have formed national evangelical alliances in 129 nations linked with over 100 international organizations, providing a worldwide identity, voice and platform to more than 650 million evangelical Christians. World Evangelical Alliance is uniquely positioned, as a representative voice, to advance evangelical values, address concerns and advocate for the marginalized. World Evangelical Alliance’s work includes its engagement at the United Nations, behind-the-scenes diplomacy with Governments and engagement with the media on global issues.

World Evangelical Alliance works on a number of issues with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

After the Millennium Summit, held in 2000, World Evangelical Alliance created the Micah Challenge as a church-based response to the Millennium Development Goals for eradicating poverty, which disproportionately affects women and children. As the mandate of the Millennium Development Goals comes to an end in 2015, we are excited to announce a new initiative known as Micah: the local church’s response to the post-2015 development agenda.

Millennium Development Goal 2 is to achieve universal primary education, and, while immense progress has been made towards that goal, there are still 58 million children who do not attend school, and many of them are girls. Through the campaign for global education of A World at School, World Evangelical Alliance is a member of the Global Faiths Coalition where we work to remove the barriers, such as child marriage and child labour, that keep children from attending school. We are also a proud partner in the #UpForSchool petition, gathering signatures from around the world to deliver them to the General Assembly at its seventieth session and demanding global education for all children, especially the girl child.

Despite the progress that has been made since the Fourth World Conference on Women, we recognize that violence against women and girls still exists. We condemn all forms of violence against women and girls, and our human trafficking task force equips local churches with the tools and resources needed for the prevention and protection aspects of human trafficking.

Churches at the local level also seek to empower survivors, mostly women and girls, by acknowledging their trauma and providing them with vocational and community resources.

Women and girls also face violence in their local communities and homes when performing household chores such as fetching water. According to UN-Water, women and girls all over the world spend close to six hours a day fetching water. The safety of those women and girls is often at risk, and the amount of time they spend fetching water can and should be used for more productive activities, such as the pursuit of education and economic opportunities. As stated in the UN-Water policy brief on gender, water and sanitation: “Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right and essential for achieving gender equality, sustainable development and poverty alleviation.” At the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2013, we held a side event with the organization Water is Basic and the Permanent Mission of South Sudan to the United Nations showcasing the life of Jina, a 12-year-old girl from the village of Hai, in South Sudan. Twice a day, Jina walked several kilometres to fetch water that was often unsafe and unclear. After Water is Basic drilled a water well in her village, Jina was able to go to school. We know that Jina’s story could be the story of millions of other women and girls around the world who fetch water on a daily basis. We call on the international community to ensure equitable access to water for all.

We recognize that women and girls hold up “half the sky” and, for that simple reason, the advancement of women and girls is central to maintaining peaceful and thriving societies. Governments must continue to increase women’s participation in leadership and decision-making positions through institutional mechanisms and continue to create policies to economically empower women and girls.

We also urge Member States to adhere to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development.

As momentum increases towards the adoption of the sustainable development goals, we call for a development framework that is transformative and people-centred. The sustainable development agenda must have a rights-based approach. While there have been many achievements in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, much work remains to be done. World Evangelical Alliance will continue to work with its network, Governments, United Nations agencies and other civil society partners to live in a world where gender equality is a reality. As the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, stated, we all have a responsibility to keep pushing ahead for the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action because every time a woman or girl is held back by discrimination or violence, humanity loses.