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Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The National Alliance of Women's Organisations United Kingdom is an umbrella organization working for the advancement of women and girls and the realization of their full human rights. It seeks to link the global and local providing the voice of our members in international fora and keeping them informed on current global endeavours. It seeks full implementation of international legal instruments for women and girls.

All those involved in the process of crafting the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and associated Sustainable Development Goals can be proud of an achievement that may well be viewed as unprecedented in human history. Over eight million people from 193 countries participated in the "Global Conversation": the largest consultation ever conducted by the United Nations. Despite the inevitable learning challenges, the boundaries of international consultation have been expanded. We have witnessed a maturation in the way this wide sector of humanity has been able to envision and articulate the world it collectively desires. The challenge ahead is for the international community to build capacity and more co-workers to achieve universal participation. A new way of working has been witnessed through this process. How is this going to affect established processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women? How can the new momentum and motivation be instilled into the Commission on the Status of Women to reinvigorate its work? How can the vital role of civil society be recognized and enhanced?

Lessons learnt

Key lessons were learnt in striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals including the need for more diverse voices, more participation, and a stronger sense of partnership. This learning laid the foundation that enabled the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved. How can the learning from the Sustainable Development Goals process be used to enhance the Commission on the Status of Women especially in light of the need to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls? How can the voices of women and girls across the globe be heard and heeded?

A Global vision

The existence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "accepted by all" and "applicable to all countries" acknowledges the interdependence of the human race. Development must benefit all and draw on the talents and capacities of all. Each person has the capacity to contribute to the global civilization as well as the right to benefit from it.

There is a growing sense of a world community heightened by the many common challenges confronting us including those particularly faced by women and girls: trafficking, displacement, poverty, violence. If this positive movement forward towards a global community is to continue, there is a need for a profound reconceptualization of the relationships that sustain society.

The importance of individuals in implementation

The true test of Agenda 2030 will be in its implementation. How can the commitment, support and efforts of the peoples of the world be secured, especially women and girls? Whilst structural reform and actions of Member States will be crucial, it is the degree to which individuals choose to act, their level of awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and the extent to which they implement them that will make a difference. In this regard it is vital that women and girls the world over are enabled to understand the Sustainable Development Goals and are engaged in their implantation and monitoring. The Secretary-General of the United Nations declared that “If we are to succeed, the new agenda cannot remain the exclusive domain of institutions and governments. It must be embraced by people.” In his synthesis report on the Post-2015 agenda, he noted that the challenges facing the global community “are not accidents of nature or the results of phenomena beyond our control. They result from actions and omissions of people.” He also stated “in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments were those that empowered people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities.” There has been a tendency to see women as victims or passive recipients of assistance. Women across their life cycle, of all ages and whatever their marital status must be equal protagonists in development.

When considering means of implementation, many reports pay attention to financing and technology. These are critical to global development. Indeed robust and more equitable distribution of both will be needed if progress is to be made. Change is attributed almost exclusively to institutions and structures, limiting the agency of individuals and communities. This has to change.

Making the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets a reality needs to be pursued not only in working groups and high-level panels, but also in growing numbers of local settings around the world with women and girls as key players.

The resource of women and girls across the world is a largely untapped reservoir. Agenda 2030 needs to ensure that the contributions of those who have traditionally been regarded as passive recipients of aid are meaningfully integrated into all processes of development that are both sustainable and just. Programmes and projects need to be gender sensitive not gender blind. High level indicators may provide some vision of what success looks like but national and subnational indicators need to be arrived at through consultation with local women and girls.

End violence against women and girls

The efforts of many at all levels have been successful to the extent that they have led to the development of frameworks to protect the rights of women and girls. There has also been an attempt to end the culture of impunity.

Violence and discrimination against women and girls is a symptom of a society ridden with conflict and injustice. Current structures and processes have been proven incapable. What is needed is the creation of conditions in which all can work together to build a more just and equitable society.

Violence against women and girls is an act of aggression towards the whole of society. The eradication of violence requires changes in law and policy, and more vitally, fundamental changes of culture, attitudes and beliefs. Such changes can be achieved once there is wholehearted understanding that the equality of women and

men is not only a nice goal to be achieved, but a truth about human nature to be acknowledged and enacted.

The role of the State

There are too many examples of inadequate resources allocated to implement laws that protect women and too few specialized services for survivors despite the fact that all individuals are under the protection of the State. Perpetrators of violence against women and girls go unpunished. Survivors need protection from retribution so penalties for perpetrators must be accompanied by robust security measures.

Tradition and belief

The responsibility of the State is to protect women and girls from violence. Hiding behind culture and religious traditions that permit violence against women perpetuates moral and legal impunity. Practices and customs that condone or promote violence must be eliminated. The voice of women within their religious or cultural community needs to be heard and heeded.

Prevention

Prevention begins by identifying the underlying causes of violence. The current conceptions of gender and of power, and the forms of discrimination and disadvantage that make women and girls vulnerable to violence need to be highlighted. More support is required for the initiatives of civil society. Men and boys must desist in protecting perpetrators and be encouraged to speak out strongly against violence and exploitation. They must make a conscious effort to understand the concept of equality and then put this into practice. Distorted expressions of power and authority demonstrated in the home create attitudes in children that are then carried through all their interactions at every level.

Requests

We ask that the following are considered by Member States in their consultations at the Commission on the Status of Women 60:

- An invigorated process with greater consultation with civil society
- An amended mandate to include monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in collaboration with other United Nations processes
- Ensure that the human resources needed to achieve global progress is addressed as robustly as other resources with an emphasis on women and girls
- Ensure capacity building and empowerment efforts develop organically and respond to local circumstances and voices especially those of women and girls
- Strengthen the call for National Action Plans to end violence against women and girls
- Strengthen support for civil society in their work
- Innovative curricula for training children in their responsibilities towards the well-being of others