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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

Status of Rural and indigenous women's in Latin America and the Caribbean

Rural and indigenous women face challenges to achieve autonomy, such as discriminatory norms and structural inequalities, limited access to education, justice and political-social participation, unpaid caring, restrictions to own property, multiple forms of violence, limited access to markets and sustainable income, lack of social services and access to employment or opportunities for advancement.

To improve their quality of life the governments must respect their human rights, which implies addressing inequality and also the underlying causes, tackled with systemic norms and behaviours of gender, power relations and social institutions.

Critical points are:

Numerous international human rights treaties refer to rural women's right. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW art. 14), outlines the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the basic human rights of women (education, health, livelihood, hygiene) and calls on states to contribute to the empowerment of rural women, respecting and enforcing their productive capacity rights: access to agricultural irrigation, economic opportunities, quality products, modern technology, financial services and the capacity to participate individually or collectively in agricultural planning and rural development. The states parties to CEDAW are required to implement these practices to guarantee equal participation between men and women in rural development.

In March 2016, the Committee for CEDAW approved general recommendation number 34 with strategies and practices regarding the states' obligations of the States to further the autonomy of rural women, including the development of policies and programs to accomplish food security and adequate nutrition, laws regarding the rural women's rights emphasizing the reduction of poverty, malnutrition and hunger.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has four key agreements within gender equality (Agreements 100, 111, 156 and 183) and another four related. The interventions proposed to increase the formal employment of rural women, improving labour conditions, reducing the gender pay gap, increasing the participation of women in unions, political and decisions making processes and expanding social protections. But national and global application of treaties lags behind their passage. 25 years after the passage of agreement 169 regarding indigenous peoples and tribes, only 22 countries have ratified it. Indigenous populations continue to suffer disproportionately from poverty and the systemic violation of their human rights.

According to United Nations General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/69/2](#), Member States undertake to support the full and effective empowerment and participation of indigenous women in political, economic, social and cultural life, and intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against them. International treaties' application is limited by lack of political will by the states, due to sociocultural values among traditional societies and gender discriminatory institutions.

In the region, women represent approximately 20 per cent of agricultural labour. It is necessary to undertake reforms to ensure women's right to economic resources including access to land and property rights. Although formal "equality" between men

and women regarding inheritance rights, family administration and property control exists, the old practices and customs of discrimination against women continue to dominate. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 82 per cent of land is held by men while 18 per cent by women.

Significant disadvantages persist regarding the protection of collective rights of indigenous populations to land and natural resources. Indigenous women suffer simultaneously from the effects of racial and gender based discrimination. It is essential to promote and support opportunities for sustainable economic development that are accessible to women and youth living in rural areas, consistent with the worldview values, assuring access to local, national and international markets as well as information and communication technology. The right to land must be guaranteed in the context of macroeconomic policies based on extractive activities, as well as the right to intellectual property of the communities' traditional knowledge.

Within the expansion of extractive industries, violence against indigenous and rural women increases. They have limited access to justice due to geographic, economic, linguistic and cultural barriers. It is key to guarantee the right to self-determination of indigenous and rural women and the access to justice, defence and representation, and the promotion of intercultural focus in all of the justice system.

In the region, many rural and indigenous territories are technologically isolated without telephone signal, radio, tv or internet coverage. It is necessary to provide technology, affordable and good quality connectivity and building capacity for rural and indigenous women to be able to exercise communication's right including the recognition of means of communication they created. Rural and indigenous women are not represented in state nor private media with dignity or as change actors. It is essential to circulate positive non stereotyped images of rural and indigenous women to eliminate discrimination.

Most of elderly populations in developing countries live in rural areas in which women predominate. To serve them requires an improvement in infrastructure. The International Plan of Action on Aging (Madrid, 2002) prioritizes elderly women in rural zones strengthening infrastructure, access to financial services, building capacities to improve agricultural techniques and technologies and expanded income generation opportunities.

Food security is a political concept by definition. The development model, defined it as demand and supply. Food sovereignty from agro-ecological model prioritizes nutritive independence and national self-production over commercial food production. It is necessary to review the development model towards one centred in quality of life, based on agriculture and food sovereignty, while revitalizing the contributions and knowledge of rural and indigenous women. They prioritize the production of food for local and domestic markets, in the context of the exploitation of rural farmers and minority families. Rural and indigenous women have an essential role in changing the dominant paradigm of development and the search for alternatives to guarantee quality and dignity of life, particularly through the transformation of the global food supply system.

Although the educational participation of girls and adolescents in the region increased, a gender based analysis reveals significant gaps within the system, especially of indigenous and rural women. The illiteracy rate in the region is slightly higher for women (8 per cent) than for men (7 per cent). The majority are indigenous women older than 50 living in rural zones far from schools. They do caring and domestic labour, and are very young mothers who had to leave early.

Education needs to be adapted directly to economic opportunities in rural areas. The curriculum and poor preparation of rural teachers are not adequate. The education systems lack cultural sensitivity and bilingual and cultural initiatives, and gender equality. This context contributes to the high dropout rate of rural and indigenous girls.

Education is a human right and the basis of full citizenship, especially for rural and indigenous women. It allows them to achieve autonomy and become part of change, at national and local level. It is essential that countries invest in literacy and adult education programs to allow rural and indigenous women to participate fully in democratic processes.

Recommendations

- Guarantee the security of indigenous and rural activists and end their persecution, incarceration and assassination.
- Implement a redistribution based in access to land, water, trees and fish and recognize the critical role of rural and indigenous women in food production and promote equal access and control of resources.
- Establish structural protection from low-priced imports within the internal market and protect seeds and allow for free trade and use by farmers.
- Make public investment oriented to local markets to increase families and communities' productive activities and implementing public policies to finance family agriculture without subordination to global agro-industry.
- Ensure access to education and increase the attendance rates of girls and teens in rural areas at all educational levels developing culturally sensitive with gender equality curriculums.
- Promote high quality intercultural education with cultural and linguistic attributes in rural and urban communities; focus on gender equality, and elimination of structural and cultural barriers such as racism, sexism, homophobia and all other forms of discrimination that limit the equal exercise of human rights for indigenous women, to empower them as agents of change.
- Create indicators with ethnicity as a variable to monitor and evaluate the status of rural and indigenous women.