



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-fourth session

9–20 March 2020

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### **Statement submitted by Socialist International Women, 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

The Socialist International Women warmly welcomes discussion and review of the important theme of ‘the twenty fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action’ at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The year 2020 will mark the twenty fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995 and adopted by 189 governments. This is a hugely significant milestone for the global community of the women’s rights movement, which has continued to grow in influence over the years and tirelessly highlights and pushes for action on the most critical issues affecting women and girls today. This powerful movement is also sowing the seeds for lasting gender equality changes for our future generations of women and girls, which benefits all of our communities and nations. Socialist International Women warmly honours the tenacious, sustained efforts of the millions of women and men who have remained committed to implementing the essential wide-ranging gender equality principles and frameworks detailed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These crucial recommendations affect all areas of women’s private, public and political lives, including enabling access to good quality education and healthcare, being protected from gender based violence and exploitation and being free to participate in political processes with a meaningful voice within decision making discussions, which affect their bodies, environments and livelihoods. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a powerful blueprint for the creation of gender equality and supporting a worldwide culture which respects, nourishes and nurtures women and girls as equals to men and boys.

Immense progress has definitely been made in some regions and on several specific issues, such as the continuing increase in levels of primary education for girls and an increased number of countries which have outlawed domestic violence and rape within marriage. However, the rate of change towards more gender equal societies remains disappointingly uneven around the world. Some regions have barely advanced at all on gender equality issues in the last 25 years, while others are showing alarming signs of regression towards attitudes of shockingly misogynistic gender inequality. In almost all cases the rate of change has simply not been radical enough or fast enough, which means that governments and communities must do much, much more as soon as possible to push the gender equality agenda into reality. The lack of meaningful action worldwide is evidenced by the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Report figures, which show that at present there are still significant gaps in achieving gender equality by 2030. This demonstrates that the need to accelerate urgent, radical action to implement gender equality measures remains a critical concern. Overall, there are several key challenges, which 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have still not been adequately addressed at a global level and strongly inhibit gender equality progress. These include the continuing pandemic of violence against women, the gender pay gap, which still sees the majority of women worldwide earning significantly less than men and the very low numbers of women worldwide in government positions, or with gender parity within their government representatives. Without immediate action to address these issues, the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals is in jeopardy and global gender equality will not be achieved by 2030. Women and girls will remain, in effect, second class citizens unable to achieve personal fulfilment and wellbeing, full educational and earning potential, personal and financial independence and freedom from violence. The absence of the energy and balancing influence of women leaves the global community much poorer

socially, intellectually and economically, and contributes to the fragility of peace within and between nations, which is an incalculable loss for all of us.

At the heart of the Socialist International Women's philosophy is the firm belief that the meaningful participation of women in political life is an essential key to lasting gender equality changes. The imbalance of power in political spheres, strongly biased towards men, has existed for far too long. Women have proven time and again their immense value as equal participants within communities wherever they have been enabled to do so. Women's full participation within political decision making is vital in achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring the sustainability and peaceful co-existence of all our citizens.

It is our vision that women and men govern their communities and nations together in equal partnership for the benefit of all citizens. To this end, Socialist International Women remains strongly committed to the full participation of women within all political and decision making processes with gender parity for members of governmental and community leadership groups.

In support of the fight for gender equality, Socialist International Women warmly welcomes the UN Women initiative, "Generation Equality, that realizes women's rights for an equal future", and demands women's rights to 'equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to their needs, and their equal participation in political life and decision-making in all areas of life.' Socialist International Women remains committed to strongly supporting all initiatives which are in alignment with gender equality goals.

With just ten years left until 2030 it is now more important than ever for all women's groups, non-governmental organisations and governments to insist that the required changes for lasting gender equality within society at all levels are implemented as soon as possible. The rise of populist politics has proved to be a huge blow to the women's movement, but working together in solidarity we can use this to strengthen our resolve and create a powerful call to action to re-commit to the fight for concrete gender equality changes that positively impact on women's lives by 2030.

Socialist International Women – is a non-governmental organisation with consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It recommits to support the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by continuing to discuss these issues at its meetings and encouraging its 140 member organisations to actively campaign and advocate in their respective countries and urge their governments to implement policies, legislation and initiatives that support the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Socialist International Women commits to contributing effectively to the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The Socialist International Women takes this opportunity to call upon all Member States, the United Nations, state structures and non-governmental organisations to take urgent action to accelerate the rate of gender equality change in their regions and nations by implementing the actions and recommendation detailed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Socialist International Women also urges support for the Sustainable Development Goals, with specific emphasis on taking urgent action on vital issues by:

- prioritising actions to enable political participation of women at local and national level
- demonstrating the principles of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action within political party activities and policies including achieving gender parity

in governing membership and prioritisation of gender equality issues in manifestos and speeches

- challenging inaction and demanding progress on critical gender equality issues such as childcare provision, access to technology, appropriate availability of healthcare provision and legalisation of protection from sexual harassment and domestic violence
  - initiating meaningful discussion of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and social democratic principles of wealth sharing, social responsibility, gender equality and inclusivity at all levels of society
  - insisting that the Sustainable Development Goals are incorporated into all local and national policies and legislation with specific focus on goal 5: achieve gender equality and empowering all women and girls.
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