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Statement submitted by Sveriges Kvinnolobby, 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

Sveriges Kvinnolobby (Swedish Women's Lobby) and the United Nations Association of Sweden welcome the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Since its adoption in 1995, the world has undergone significant transformation, which has caused new challenges for women's rights. Climate change and migration streams have had vast consequences on humanity and especially on women's lives. New technologies have been used in the service of humanity, but also to undermine women's rights. While progress has been made in areas, such as access to education for women and girls and achieving lower child mortality, objectification and sexualization of women in media and culture has increased, and violence directed towards women has worsened.

In the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Swedish Women's Lobby and the United Nations Association of Stockholm identify areas where we see the need for governments to urgently act to live up to its promises.

Women and the environment

Climate change and environmental degradation are the greatest challenges facing the world. In recent years, climate action has been put on top of the political agenda. Young people stress the urgency to rapidly transpose societies to keep the world a livable place for future generations.

Climate change impacts women's lives disproportionately. Yet, women are underrepresented in all areas and at all levels of political processes and decision-making towards sustainable development. Women must be involved in defining needs, discussing solutions, and participating in all levels of decision-making.

Research on the consequences of climate change for women must be prioritized. Issues, ranging from access to water, sanitation, food and energy, food production and disaster risk reduction to resource management, transport, and technological innovations that reduce environmental impact, require the participation of women to find solutions.

Sustainable development requires a holistic approach with an integrated gender equality perspective based on ecologic, economic, and social conditions. The protection of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights during environmental and climate-related disasters must be addressed, along with the prevention of violence, trafficking, and targeting women and children during natural disasters.

Women and the economy

Gender equality is a determining factor for good economic, social, and sustainable development. The strategic objectives on women and poverty and women and the economy remain central for action globally.

We call on governments to promote women's economic independence and rights, including access to remunerated work, satisfactory working conditions, equal pay, and pensions. Governments must define actions to reduce income differences between women and men. Further research is required on how macroeconomic principles and models sustain inequality and on how to adjust models to include the gender dimension for creating a fair and sustainable society. To make economic policies gender responsive, we call on governments to introduce gender budgeting in national budgets and to ensure that unpaid care work is visible in national accounts and reflected in economic models.

Violence against women

Violence against women is still widespread in all countries and must be a major concern to every society and nation. Sexual harassment and abuse, rape, psychological and physical violence, genital mutilation, forced marriages, honour-related violence, femicide, pornography, prostitution, and trafficking in women for sexual exploitation are some of the criminal acts committed against women and girls worldwide.

In the celebration of 20 years with the Swedish Sex Purchase Act, the women's movement wants to underline the importance of this "Gender Equality Model" in combatting sexual exploitation and trafficking in women. We call on Member States to introduce an equivalent model to criminalize the purchase, but not the sale, of sexual services. In addition to legislation, exit programs, preventative work with men and boys, and reinforced capacity for the police and the judiciary are needed to prosecute sex buyers and pimps and to put an end to the sex trade.

The Swedish Women's Lobby and the United Nations Association of Stockholm notes, with concern, attempts to deviate from agreed language on prostitution within United Nations institutions and international organizations. In the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, we call on the United Nations and Member States to retain agreed language on prostitution in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Palermo protocols.

Furthermore, the Swedish women's movement is concerned with the increasing trade in women as surrogate mothers. Surrogacy is a severe violation of women's bodily integrity, dignity, and human rights, as well as a violation of the right of the child. It is a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Convention, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Convention on Slavery. We call on the United Nations to urgently initiate a process aimed at recommending that surrogate motherhood be prohibited as a practice that is incompatible with human rights and the dignity of women. We request that the United Nations appoint a Special Rapporteur on surrogate motherhood to assess the extent of commercial exploitation of women for reproductive services and establish the basic human rights principles to protect women from reproductive trade.

Women and the media

During the last 25 years, the world has undergone a technological revolution. Information technologies have brought us into a new digital age, and the Internet has become an everyday means of communication in the lives of billions of people. The rise of the Internet has led to new challenges in protecting women and girls from gender stereotyping, such as online hate speech, grooming, and sexual harassment.

The extensive spread of pornography must be addressed, as it has vast consequences for women's rights and gender equality, especially for children and young people. Online pornography teaches children to sexualize the humiliation of and violence against women, and it is only a click away in every child's mobile phone and laptop. The women's movement sees the urgent need to put in place technical measures that could limit the access of online pornography and protect women and men and girls and boys from online sexual violence. Comprehensive measures to reduce the harms of pornography are a precondition for all efforts to prevent sexual violence against women and girls.

In the development of new technology and artificial intelligence, which to a large extent will change the world in the coming decades, women must be involved.

It is crucial that gender equality permeates the development of new technology and not used to undermine women's rights.

The Swedish Women's Lobby is a politically and religiously independent umbrella organization for women's organizations in Sweden. We work to fulfil women's full human rights and towards a gender equal society within Sweden, the European Union, and internationally. The Swedish Women's Lobby is based on feminist grounds and has 49 member organizations. The foundations of our activities are the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
