



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
2 December 2021

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

**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 Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 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 Episcopal Church is a Christian denomination of 1.8 million members in 17 nations in North America, Latin America & the Caribbean, Europe and Asia & the Pacific and a member province of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the third largest Christian denomination.

Episcopalians believe that God is the originator of all creation and created all humans equally in God's image, worthy of dignity, love, liberty, and life-giving relationships with God, each other and creation. Our scriptures, Jesus' way of love, and our baptismal covenant call us to love God and each other as ourselves, to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to care for creation. Responding to God's abundant grace and love, we affirm the call to empower women and girls, including those identifying as transgender, celebrate their diversity, honor their forerunners, and welcome next generations.

Our Christian values explain The Episcopal Church's affirmation of United Nations international conventions, agreements and declarations calling for just and equal treatment of women and girls, protection of creation, climate and environment, poverty eradication and sustainable development. Episcopalians support women and girls, and creation care, through their mission, programs, legislation, policies and advocacy by individuals, congregations, dioceses, schools, seminaries, agencies and networks.

Episcopalians of all genders and in all regions report their experiences with intensifying impacts of climate change and related disasters, including droughts, desertification, floods, sea level rise, wildfires and heat waves, as well as biodiversity loss and pollution. These impacts disproportionately affect marginalized populations, resulting in increased disasters, land degradation, diminished quality of life and poorer health, violation of human rights, food insecurity and poverty, economic and political instability, insecurity and conflict, authoritarianism, displacement and forced migration, gender-based violence (including early and forced marriage, trafficking in children and women and intimate partner violence), and aggressive behavior, anxiety and mental health disorders. The Church responds vigorously at individual, local, diocesan, national and international levels by prioritizing environmental stewardship ("creation care") and climate action through parish, diocesan and churchwide legislation, programming, financing and advocacy.

While The Episcopal Church celebrates progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment for and by women and girls worldwide, it recognizes that they are disproportionately exposed to and impacted by the risks and injustices that climate change exacerbates, such as displacement, poverty, violence and disease.

Consequently, the Church urges member states, United Nations entities, and civil society to:

(1) Address the climate emergency and implement gender mainstreaming across climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs:

The survival of our planet and people depends upon urgent, widespread action to address the triple emergency of climate, biodiversity loss and pollution. Additionally, climate change disproportionately impacts the lives, livelihoods and progress of women and girls; gender inequalities and societal gender roles exacerbate its impacts, especially for women in rural areas, agriculturally based and/or low-income economies. Simultaneously, women and girls are active change agents with frontline experience and expertise, innovators in transformation, highly influential decision-makers, educators and caretakers, Indigenous and traditional knowledge keepers, adaptation and mitigation entrepreneurs, storytellers and speakers,

stakeholders and sovereigns. These imbalances must be addressed in climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

(2) Prioritize responses and protections for women and girls marginalized by environmental racism:

Beyond assuring gender-responsive policies and programs, decision-makers must expose and confront colonialism, white supremacy, environmental racism and discrimination as root causes and drivers that have marginalized populations of women and girls for hundreds of years. We declare unacceptable the disproportionate inequalities and sufferings experienced by Indigenous women; women of color; women of African descent; women experiencing discrimination for their ethnicity, race, caste, descent, language, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity/expression; women with disabilities; women experiencing poverty; migrants, refugees, internally displaced, undocumented, or stateless women; rural women; older and ageing women; and women heads of households. Their human rights are frequently violated, and their lands, homes, resources, and opportunities unprotected from discriminatory and unsafe industrial and corporate practices, poor land use and planning, pollution, resource extractions and violation of Indigenous sacred spaces. States regularly fail to consult them on matters affecting them directly. In 2018, The Episcopal Church affirmed that no community, especially poor communities, those who live closest to the land in subsistence cultures, and members of marginalized ethnic groups, should bear a disproportionate risk of environmental pollution or degradation. When Episcopalians embraced the call to “leave no one behind” and “reach the furthest behind first” in Agenda 2030, this meant prioritizing these communities.

(3) Accelerate women’s and girls’ empowerment and gender equality and eradicate violence against women and girls. To overcome disproportionate impacts on women and girls in climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction, we must continually address underlying gender imbalances, eradicate violence against women and girls and promote gender equality education. Gender equality will only become reality once the whole of society understands its social, economic, and political benefits and agrees to transform root causes.

The Episcopal Church urges member states, the United Nations, civil society and all people to:

- universally ratify and implement international legal frameworks including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement, Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 2030, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Security Council Resolution 1325 and Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- allocate 0.7 per cent of national operating budgets for Sustainable Development Goals;
- divest from fossil fuels, lower greenhouse gas emissions, accelerate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and honor just transition;
- enforce environmental protections for clean air, clean water, biodiversity and wilderness protection;
- recognize and raise awareness that climate change differently impacts people by gender and that women and girls are at the frontline of climate impact;
- research and report scientific evidence of impact on and responses by women and girls using gender-specific indicators and sex-disaggregated data;

- involve women in decisions affecting themselves, their families, and communities in response to disasters and humanitarian emergencies;
- encourage and advocate for gender inclusive approaches to forced migration and displacement, increasing financial and practical support;
- lift women's leadership on climate justice, support gender inclusive approaches to climate resilience and make available as resources institutions and providers working with disasters, climate refugees, maternal health, poverty alleviation, and addressing inequalities;
- protect the health of all persons from unsafe and unhealthy exposures to air and water pollution, toxic substances, or radiation in their food, water supply, living quarters, and workplaces;
- address unwise governmental decisions regarding land use, industrial, energy and transportation development, and application of environmental standards;
- advocate for and support policies protecting these populations, the sanctity of communities and livelihood of future generations from disparate impacts of climate change and environmental degradation;
- protect the sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge;
- dismantle historical and contemporary forms of environmental racism, repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and pursue of truth and reconciliation processes and reparations;
- amplify voices and prioritize participation of Indigenous women and girls, youth, people of color in planning, resource allocation and programs and uphold their Free, Prior and Informed Consent;
- address food insecurity and sovereignty and ensure access to healthy food;
- ensure human rights education and awareness campaigns for all of society and enforce rights protections via local, national and international legal mechanisms;
- increase and extend access to basic resources, public social services and social protections and infrastructure for women and girls, including formal and informal education and training, universal health care, maternal and infant health, sexual and reproductive health, equal access to health care regardless of gender, paid family leave, affordable and safe childcare, viable social security systems and sustainable infrastructure, living wages for all and equal pay for equal work;
- facilitate women's ownership of land, property, and businesses, especially in agriculture sectors;
- recognize women as contractual parties and participants in financial and commercial transactions;
- promote gender equality education for all, including transgender, and include men and boys;
- continue multi-stakeholder collaborations and grassroots awareness campaigns to end gender violence;
- strengthen legal and judicial protections, including law enforcement, for all women and girls, especially survivors of violence;

- ensure gender equality in consultation, policy design, decision-making, leadership and representation at all levels.

Twenty-five years after Beijing, five years after the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations must ensure ecojustice includes gender justice in climate, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.
