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Commission on the Status of Women

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**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 Commonwealth Medical Trust, 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

Review on future organization and methods of work: Strengthening the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women

During its sixty-sixth session, the Commission on the Status of Women will have before it the Secretary-General's report on its future organization and methods of work. This document, which will assess the implementation of the resolution adopted at its fifty-ninth session provides an important opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Commission and non-governmental organizations within the framework of 'civil society'.

While recognising that the resources of UN Women and the Commission are limited, there are some changes that would significantly increase the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations' contributions at comparatively little cost, which could be construed as "quick wins".

From the outset

Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter, "We the peoples..." has been an integral part, alongside Governments and others, in efforts to accomplish its goals and aims, as set out in Article 71 on arrangements for consultation for non-governmental organizations with the Economic and Social Council. In the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, women's organizations and groups have been key players in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcome documents of their review conferences and in areas including the development of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions within the Women, Peace and Security framework.

The potential for full participation in the work of the Commission of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council is recognized in Resolution II as contained in the Report of its fifty-ninth session ([E/2015/27-E/CN.6/2015/10](#)) (Resolution II).

Non-governmental organization participation in the work of the Commission includes three areas as defined in Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996/31 "Consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations". They are (a) written statements; (b) oral presentations during meetings; (c) consultation with the Secretariat.

Resolution II recognizes the importance of non-governmental organizations in advancing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PP7) and their potential contributions in such areas as consideration of the priority theme (OP8); emerging issues (OP11); their inclusion on delegations as technical experts (OP21) etc. Nevertheless there is potential for their even greater involvement in the work of the Commission in the future.

(a) NGO statements

Because of the large number of organizations making statements, the date for their submission precedes the availability of the Secretary-General's reports to the Commission, often by several weeks. This means that they are prepared in a vacuum. Consideration could be given to a later date for submission which would make them more relevant to the Commission's agenda.

At the same time, a “quick win” could be for the statements, when submitted, to be posted on the website under the relevant agenda item. This would facilitate the perusal of statements by delegations without the necessity of trawling through all of them.

(b) *Oral presentations*

Non-governmental organizations appreciate the efforts made to include their interventions in discussions of the priority and review themes, while being painfully aware that they are only called to do so when there is available time. Organizations do their best to facilitate maximum inputs by making joint statements whenever possible, and they recognize that there are specific agenda items, e.g. on Communications, that are closed. Since 2015, however, they have had greater access in meetings related to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) than they have had in the work of the Commission.

We would, therefore, respectfully request consideration of expanding possibilities for non-governmental organizations to make interventions before members of the Commission. These could include, for example, a session similar to that successfully used at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with dialogue between members of the Commission and non-governmental organizations either immediately before, or during the Commission. In addition, their role in suggesting “emerging issues” could be strengthened.

(c.i) *Consultations with UN Secretariat / UN Women*

Non-governmental organizations appreciate the efforts made by UN Women to consult with civil society in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This is often very rewarding and is an effective way to allow non-governmental inputs, e.g. most recently through the UN Women-CSO Working Group on SDG Monitoring. There are other possibilities for greater consultation that could be explored further, e.g. a series of consultations before the Secretary-General’s reports are developed, thereby allowing a wider civil society perspective to be considered.

(c.ii) *Consultations with Commission on the Status of Women Chair and Bureau*

In 2021 the Chair of the Commission on Population and Development instigated discussions, before the session, with interested non-governmental organizations on their effective inputs into its work. The co-facilitators for the Commission’s resolution also met with non-governmental organizations to discuss issues for possible inclusion. These consultations were highly effective, providing important opportunities for a wide spectrum of organizations to be heard. As they were virtual, smaller organizations and those based far away from New York could participate.

Further involvement of non-governmental organizations for enhanced Commission effectiveness:

Insofar as Resolution II was passed in 2015 at the time when the discussions for the 2030 Agenda were also taking place, the review of the Methods of Work provides further opportunities for increased cohesion and involvement in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. One area for possible consideration would be for Governments and UN Women to work even more closely with the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders to ensure that their advocacy includes the promotion of the Commission outcomes, as included in its Agreed Conclusions and resolutions.

Non-governmental organizations can also play an increased role at the regional level, particularly in deliberations related to the 2030 Agenda. Many organizations

are actively involved in regional civil society mechanisms for regional consultation and have opportunities to be heard in such deliberations.

In addition to consultations with Co-facilitators on negotiations on outcome documents, as referred to above, non-governmental organizations have increasingly been able to observe negotiations of other bodies, particularly related to the development of the 2030 Agenda. We would therefore like to request that modalities be developed for closer linkages for non-governmental organizations with processes such as negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions, e.g. attendance by a limited number of non-governmental representatives as observers in the room during the process, with the exception of the most intense negotiation. This would enhance communication and advocacy among non-governmental organizations and with Governments.

Conclusion

Non-governmental organizations have actively promoted and contributed to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women since its inception and have consulted on an ongoing basis with the UN Secretariat. In line with resolution 1996/31 they have been able to use their consultative status effectively and consistently. But there are possibilities for them to make even more contributions in the future and the consideration of the Methods of Work at the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on Status of Women provides a major opportunity for this to happen.

Summary of suggested actions:

The following provides a summary of our suggested actions:

Providing a later date for submission of non-governmental organization statements to make them more relevant to the Commission's agenda.

Posting non-governmental organization statements on the website under the relevant agenda item.

Expanding possibilities for non-governmental organizations interventions, including a session for dialogue between members of the Commission and non-governmental organizations immediately before, or during the Commission.

Strengthening their role in identifying "emerging issues".

Developing modalities for closer involvement of non-governmental organizations in processes such as negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions.

Increasing consultation opportunities for non-governmental organizations with UN Women, including before the Secretary-General's reports are developed.

Holding consultations between the Chair and Members of the Commission's Bureau on strengthening non-governmental organizations participation as well as substantive issues.

Increasing consultations between Governments and UN Women with Major Groups and Other Stakeholders to promote Commission outcomes in the achievement and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

Strengthening collaboration with non-governmental organizations in the development of regional inputs into the 2030 Agenda.

Co-signed by:

Associated Country Women of the World

National Alliance of Women's Organizations

National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales

National Council of Women of Canada

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform

Soroptimist International

Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited

Widows for Peace through Democracy

Widows Rights International
