



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

Agenda item 3 (a) (ii)

**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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

## Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

### Chair’s summary

1. On 10 March 2023, in a series of interactive dialogues, the Commission on the Status of Women evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the priority theme of its sixty-second session, namely, challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls ([E/2018/27-E/CN.6/2018/20](#)). The Minister of Social Development of South Africa, Lindiwe Zulu, and Vice-Chair of the Commission, Māris Burbergs (Latvia), chaired the interactive dialogues.
2. As part of the review, the following seven Member States presented information, on a voluntary basis, on trends and challenges: Brazil, Chile, Côte d’Ivoire, Jordan, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine.
3. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Sarah Hendriks, presented the report of the Secretary-General on the review theme ([E/CN.6/2023/4](#)), which draws on information received from Member States and other sources and reviews the implementation by Member States of the agreed conclusions of the Commission at its sixty-second session, the priority theme of which was “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”. In that report, actions by Member States in the following areas are considered: strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks to promote and protect the full enjoyment of human rights, eliminate discrimination and violence, and promote access to natural, economic and productive resources for all rural women and girls; implementing economic and social policies



for the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through gender mainstreaming, fiscal policies, food security and nutrition, decent work and entrepreneurship, care work, education, health and gender statistics; and strengthening the collective voice, leadership and decision-making of all rural women and girls.

### **Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks**

4. All the countries giving voluntary national presentations reported progress in strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks, with some countries emphasizing the important synergies between the implementation of the agreed conclusions, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Most countries recognized equality of women, women's rights and gender equality as enshrined in their constitutions. Several countries recognized the importance of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment as a critical part of the collective effort to address climate change. Countries also underlined that rural women and girls, especially Indigenous rural women and girls, were disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change. Several countries provided examples of policies to support sustainable agriculture.

5. Countries highlighted progress in the implementation of strategies to end violence against women and girls. In several countries, dedicated national action plans had been elaborated to combat gender-based violence, including in the workplace. Multiple countries noted that the scourge of violence against women had deepened owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The disproportionate risk of violence faced by women and girls in rural areas was also raised as a critical issue.

6. Member States had enacted laws and policies that promoted rural women's participation in the world of work and that prohibited discrimination in the labour market. Measures included guaranteeing equal opportunities to work and equal pay for work of equal value. Moreover, Member States reported to have launched programmes and training centres to increase and facilitate the access of rural women and girls to education, especially in areas such as technology, where they were vastly underrepresented.

### **Implementing economic and social policies for the empowerment of rural women and girls**

7. Member States had scaled up the scope and influence of national gender equality mechanisms for enhanced gender mainstreaming and coordination of policy implementation. They emphasized the need for governments to implement social policies that encompassed all women and girls, in order to protect, mobilize and strengthen the capacities of women.

### **Strengthening the collective voice, leadership and decision-making of all rural women and girls**

8. Member States underscored the importance of improving measures to strengthen women's leadership and participation in decision-making at all levels, as well as advancing the political empowerment of rural women. Member States also highlighted progress in women's representation in politics, including specific examples of temporary special measures, such as constitutional amendments, to ensure women's increased representation, participation and leadership in decision-making.

9. Several participants emphasized the need for governments to implement inclusive economic and social policies for local women and girls, including

Indigenous women. Speakers called for strengthened national systems that regulated laws and directives and understood the importance of women's economic empowerment, particularly for rural women.

10. Countries recognized policies to increase women's access to social protection, education, technology and loans as a process of enhancing the productivity and sustainable development of women while also upholding their human rights. One country underscored the need for labour market policies that addressed societal norms and challenges faced by women as caregivers. Speakers emphasized the interlinkages between social protection and an enabling environment for women's participation in the economy, emphasizing women's unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities that inhibited their full potential in the labour market. Several participants noted that the private sector could have a potentially positive role in shaping better workplaces for women. Member States acknowledged the need for women to have equal access to education, finance and technology. Some countries highlighted feminist approaches to development assistance, which addressed both structural issues and material needs to ensure that those women in the most vulnerable situations were not left behind.

### **Challenges and gaps**

11. Member States identified challenges and gaps that should be addressed to make progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls, including:

(a) The lack of access to financial resources, because of discrimination based on sex, race, disability, migratory status, sexual orientation and gender identity, among other things, posed persistent obstacles to gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of access to land;

(b) Prevailing patriarchal attitudes, discriminatory social norms, women's increased poverty and women's disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work continued to impede greater progress towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Member States stressed the need to target women and youth as part of inclusive growth strategies, including through increased vocational training, science, technology, engineering and maths programmes for women and girls, entrepreneurship capacity-building, access to capital and long-term finance, and the creation of decent work opportunities;

(c) To ensure that women were represented and had a voice at all levels of decision-making in institutional mechanisms, frameworks, laws and policies, more inclusive approaches that responded to the needs of women in all their diversity must be taken;

(d) A gender-responsive, human-rights-based and intersectional approach was necessary to achieve sustainable development and gender equality.