



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 December 2022

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

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 Associated Country Women of the World, Commonwealth Medical Trust, Graduate Women International (GWI), National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales, National Council of Women in Great Britain, Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform, Soroptimist International, Soroptimist International of Europe, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited, Training for Women Network, United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UNA-UK), Wales Assembly of Women, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Widows Rights International, Womankind Worldwide, and World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, non-governmental organizations 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 UK Civil Society Women's Alliance submits this statement on behalf of over 450 members.

The human race has never had more potential to shape the physical world on a global scale. Without wise consideration, and policies and programmes attuned to the common good, this potential can, however, result in irreversible negative consequences. When faced by the grave results of humanity's over-indulgence, we must feel compelled to develop more collaborative and constructive relationships between the peoples of the world in all areas of endeavour.

It is clear that massive change in the organisation of human affairs has become imperative. The question before Member States is whether the decision to implement vital preventative measures will be taken by choice, or whether it will be prompted by the destruction and suffering created by increasing environmental, economic and social breakdown. We urge you to consider the former.

We call on Member States at this session of the Commission on the Status of Women to consider how to utilize the earth's resources for the good of all. We must be conscious of our attitudes toward the source of our subsistence. Our activities must reflect the fact that the wealth of the earth is the common heritage of all people, who deserve fair and equitable access to its resources. Our choices must evidence an acceptance of an inter-generational perspective in which the well-being of future inhabitants as well as those currently in power, is taken into account at all levels of decision-making. Thus, when we consider the creation and utilization of all technological devices, we need to bear in mind the impact of our sourcing of materials has upon the planet and its peoples. For example, experience has shown that the desire for mobile phones with the necessary minerals for their production has accelerated and perpetuated conflict in resource areas; and it is well known the myriad ways in which conflict severely affects women and girls, especially female-headed households.

Numerous environmental and other challenges traverse the boundaries drawn on maps and therefore cannot be solved only through national legislation. Yet there are also legitimate national concerns. Presumptions of any one group's superiority over another, along lines of nationality, race, wealth, or any other characteristic, destroys the required environment to generate consensus and sustain coordinated action.

We call on Member States therefore to seek creative and innovative global solutions to the challenges that face us all as we strive to provide technological advances to all parts of society within a sustainable environmental framework, recognizing that solutions to national concerns need to be found within effective and co-ordinated global action.

Whilst technological advancement has provided many advantages, it is seldom experienced by everyone equally. There is an insufficiency of national plans to ensure technological development and education are available to all, and to combat the digital divide: between those who are able to access communications technologies and those who can't. The gap between rhetoric and action is well recognized and leads to frustration. Some would suggest that the lack of implementation is the result of a more profound challenge: the nature of current development theory and practice.

Experience has shown that without the engagement of those whose lives are affected, programmes and policies are not effective. It is therefore vital that women and girls everywhere be empowered to participate in the processes that create technological development and that there is a process-oriented approach to progress.

Every population has the right and responsibility to shape its own route of progress. Each has a unique contribution to make. In order to ensure full participation, decision-making processes have to take place at the most local level and be totally inclusive. Building capacity in individuals, communities, and institutions to contribute effectively to transformational change is therefore necessary. It is especially important to ensure the participation of young women, poor and uneducated women and girls, indigenous women, disabled women, rural women, widows and others whose voices are rarely heard and heeded.

We call on Member States therefore to ensure processes for innovation and technological change ensure full participation, from conception to implementation, in all projects and programmes.

We call on Member States to show strong commitment at the international level to enable leaders at regional, national and local levels to overcome the barriers in implementing necessary change. Women and girls worldwide are tired of witnessing endless signing of agreements that are rarely effectively implemented.

The earth and all that lives upon it have suffered from the materialistic mindset that considers each person as merely a competitor for limited resources. An alternative perception of the nobility of humanity is required, one that recognizes altruism and the desire for the common good. Building consensus around innovation, technological change and education with this view in mind may help ensure moral and ethical ideals take precedence over profit. The United Nations has achieved this in the past in the example of blood diamonds.

We call on Member States to develop budgets for education and technological development centered around well-being and other transformative indicators of progress rather than gross domestic product which never recognises the contribution of women's unpaid care, for example.

For decades many have called for girls globally to receive 12 years quality education. This has not yet been realized. Girls and women everywhere remain illiterate and, without training or employment options, are prevented to realise their full potential. Women and girls globally are not accessing tertiary education and the lack of skills training increases their vulnerability to violence and prostitution. Yet technology offers creative solutions.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action cited women and health as a critical area of concern and yet on so many fronts the situation for women and girls in terms of health outcomes remains challenging. From lack of attention to menstrual hygiene and period poverty, to medical training regarding symptoms for stroke and heart attack for women and drug trials concentrating on male responses, there is much yet to be achieved for women and girls' health. There are innovative solutions such as using mobile technology to keep rural doctors up to date with training yet such programmes are insufficiently funded.

Technological development and innovation are moving so quickly, the possibilities for humanity are immeasurable. The challenge lies in how to seize these opportunities. We call on Member States to ensure the full use of individual potential and combined efforts at every level. The decades to come could be a hugely rewarding and fruitful period of human history. Whilst the scale of transformation required is huge, yet it affords the possibility of unleashing immense human creativity and initiative.

We call on Member States to establish a committee of experts to look at best practice from across the globe, seeking innovative solutions to the challenges mentioned in this statement and well noted elsewhere. They would identify promising efforts already in place, questions that could be explored, possible areas for action

and means to estimate and model the effects that proposed policies might have. This should be a continuous process of learning from action.

It is well known that good governance creates the context in which the private sector, civil society, academia and others can make their best contributions. We call on Member States to evince such governance and establish mechanisms that ensure that multinational corporations, media entities, technological platforms, academia, philanthropists, think tanks and others are included as long as they enhance the contributions of all. Education and technological development cannot be effective in true empowerment if undue influence is gained by excessive financial or other resources.

The age of ever-accelerating technological development has provided vast opportunities – but these are not universally accessible for women and girls. Greater consensus and collective will is required. A recognition that the values highlighted above are necessary for a mature humanity is imperative. We call on Member States to show greater resolve in putting these values into practice, to recommit to the common good, and ensure technology is used to enable full equality between women and men, girls and boys.
