



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 December 2023

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

11–22 March 2024

**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 Lutheran World Federation, 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 Lutheran World Federation welcomes the timely theme of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective. Poverty remains a significant impediment to the enjoyment of life with dignity for hundreds of millions of people across the world, and women and girls are disproportionately affected.

In the current challenging global context marked by multiple crises, the United Nations member states must take steps to accelerate action to end poverty, reduce inequalities and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by creating a global financial and economic system that is conducive to the fulfillment of gender equality. According to the International Labour Organization, 829 million women live in poverty worldwide compared to 522 million men. While there are variations across countries and regions, it is completely deplorable that the global face of poverty is still predominantly female.

The Lutheran World Federation calls for just, fair and equitable economic and financial systems as a means towards alleviating poverty with delineated and disaggregated attention to women and girls.

In the current global financial and economic architecture many women lack access to means of production, like land and finance and operate on the margins of mainstream economies. While girls are increasingly accessing educational opportunities it is not adequately mirrored in the workforce or in the provision of, and increased access to, economic activities. Structures and systems hinder economic development and other enterprising opportunities for women. Women face workplace sexism and discrimination, are under-represented in leadership and decision-making, are more visible in low-paying fields, and are paid less than men for the same work. These realities are even worse for women of color, who earn less on average than white women due to intersecting sexism and racism. Moreover, women are more likely to do vital, but unpaid work without social safety nets, which can disrupt future economic opportunities and potential. According to the World Bank, more than 75 per cent of all caregivers are women, and women generally spend more time on caregiving tasks than men. Women do at least twice as much unpaid care work, such as childcare, eldercare and domestic tasks as men – sometimes 10 times as much, often in addition to their paid work. The value of this free labor each year is an estimated \$10.8 trillion – more than three times the size of the global technology industry.

Furthermore, 75 per cent of women in developing countries are in the informal economy – where they are less likely to have employment contracts, legal rights or social protections, and are often not paid enough to escape their own circumstance of poverty. 600 million women are in the most insecure and precarious forms of work. Across the world, women are in the lowest-paid work. UN Women reports that globally, women earn 24 percent less than men and at the current rate of progress it will take 170 years to close the gap. 700 million fewer women than men are in paid work.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women are the primary agricultural producers, accounting for around 80 per cent of the region's food production (Food and Agriculture Organization). However, they seldom own the land they work on, and are systematically excluded from consultation with decision-makers on national poverty reduction, agriculture or land-use policies and strategies. Women, particularly those in rural communities, are often unable to secure credit or access agricultural extension services, which forces them into self-perpetuating cycles of poverty. With the deepening climate crisis, women in developing countries are at a higher risk of losing their livelihoods as most rely on agriculture. Overcoming the devastating climate impacts already hitting the most vulnerable communities requires the necessary

climate finances so people can adapt to climate risks and address unavoidable loss and damage.

Through its work, the Lutheran World Federation is striving toward a world where women and men have equal opportunity to engage in decent work, while maintaining baseline social protections and violence prevention. As part of its commitment to women and to promote their participation in economic activities, the Lutheran World Federation has piloted the following projects:

- Zimbabwe: Project to link skills training, advocacy, and community building to increase the impact and sustainability of economic resilience.
- Palestine: Program to provide vocational training for women – including women with disabilities – improving access to technical and vocational training programs. The project has enabled women and girls’ participation in the labor market, increase their status in their communities and in some cases, has positively impacted power dynamics within their homes.
- Burundi: Program to help women to realize their agency and voice through advocacy to improve their social and economic rights and tackle discrimination.

The Lutheran World Federation believes that supporting women’s access to quality and decent work and support to improve their livelihoods is vital for fulfillment of women’s rights, reducing poverty and attaining broader sustainable development goals.

The Lutheran World Federation calls on UN member states to address inequalities, remove the debt burden and establish a global fair and legally binding United Nation’s Tax Convention.

The world is experiencing the fastest growth of inequalities since before World War II. COVID19, the deepening climate crisis and increasing conflict have contributed to entire countries facing bankruptcy. The poorest states spend four times more on servicing debt than providing health care. The private sector operates with little global oversight or accountability, finding every tax dodging loophole and unceasingly prioritizing profit and greed over people, human rights or the environment. For most women around the world structural barriers, exclusionary practices, and policies limit equal participation in economic activities at all levels. Economic injustices exacerbate humanitarian crises and often multiply the risks for sexual and gender-based violence. These unsustainable trends will only become more entrenched with increasing interest rates, increasing debt, increasing frequency of financial shocks and a culture of unchecked growth and greed.

The most effective and impactful funding mechanism for sustainable development and human rights is domestic resource mobilization. Therefore, debt cancelation and a progressive tax regime will offer a fair, justice and rights-based pathway to sustainable and accountable development.

The Lutheran World Federation works with stakeholders such as local leaders, public servants, service providers, and other duty bearers to encourage more equitable and accessible economic services and resources so women are not left behind. The Lutheran World Federation supports its member churches and local partners in engaging with local and national governments, and the private sector on economic and development policies to ensure that women and men have the means to survive and thrive.

In this regard, and on behalf of its 150 member churches, representing 77 million Christians in 99 countries, the Lutheran World Federation makes an urgent call to the international community and UN Member States to consider the following in negotiating the CSW 68 outcomes:

- Intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls through the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Security Council Resolution 1325 and full the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and other key and UN agreements.
 - Expedite the development of a legally binding Convention on Tax, ensuring that it is fair, just and equitable.
 - Scale-up funding for projects and programs that target rural areas, food security and agriculture and prioritize and consider the gender dynamics of food production, procurement and distribution within both households and markets.
 - Establish and strengthen effective economic policies and systems of accountability that improve the status of women at all levels work identifying and building upon existing capacities of women and other vulnerable groups to ensure universal access to social protection and decent work.
 - Work in collaboration with churches and faith-based organizations, who already provide millions of people around the world with quality education, health and other services to ensure that women and girls achieve the full enjoyment of their rights.
 - Reaffirm the role of civil society, including faith-based actors and recognize their expertise in innovation, education, promoting gender justice and the realization of Agenda 2030.
 - Redouble efforts toward the provision of climate finance and ensure that its distribution supports projects and climate activities that adhere to the highest standard of gender equity and inclusion.
 - Commit to ending all forms of violence as a prerequisite for human rights, sustainable development and peace for all.
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