



# Economic and Social Council

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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 Pacific Women’s Watch (New Zealand), 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Pacific Women's Watch New Zealand (New Zealand), in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2010, works for gender justice and equality for all women and girls in New Zealand. The foundation documents of Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) declare our recognition of the indigenous Māori women as Tangata Whenua (People of the Land) and the Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document of New Zealand. The core goals of Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) are to monitor, review and report on progress in advancing the well-being of all women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand. Addressing poverty and ensuring a gender focussed sustainable infrastructure is critical for achieving equality and empowerment for all women and girls, with special focus needed to solve the challenges faced by Māori, Pasifika, migrant and disabled women and girls, rural women, and the Rainbow community.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) promotes the full implementation of the principles of the International Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, The Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals are important tools in accelerating the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women. However, we are concerned at the slow progress in achieving these goals and at the lack of knowledge in the wider population. Recent research in New Zealand shows wide spread belief that Aotearoa New Zealand has attained gender equality and increasing conservative attitudes about gender.

A significant issue hampering the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women is the Gender Pay Gap which is stubbornly persistent at around 10 per cent. A grass roots action ("Mind the Gap") raising awareness of the gender pay gap has been supported by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission which has also identified alarming ethnic pay gaps impacting especially Māori, Pacific and ethnic minority women. These women experience significant pay gaps: Māori women 19 per cent, Pacific women 25 per cent and Asian women 17 per cent.

In an effort to address the gender and ethnic pay gaps, the Ministry for Women, encouraged by women's groups, has put forward plans to introduce mandatory gender pay gap reporting. This will establish pay rate transparency to highlight pay gaps. At this stage ethnicity is not included in the report. The Gender Pay Gap reporting will stand alongside the recently established Fair Pay Agreement legislation which should improve women's financial wellbeing.

Women are well represented at high levels of government. Public sector boards have 53 per cent women although there is a lack of diversity. The private sector has only 25 per cent women in senior roles. Aotearoa New Zealand achieved 50 per cent women in the last parliament.

In Aotearoa New Zealand poverty affects the lives and opportunities for many women and girls from all parts of the community. However, Māori, Pasifika, Migrant and disabled women and girls, and the Rainbow community are the most disadvantaged. Māori, Pacific and Migrant women are frequently employed in the lowest paid jobs which are regularly deemed "women's work". For many women, especially those from the most disadvantaged groups, opportunities are not equitable. Their ability to participate fully impacted by issues such as access to health care and affordable childcare, unpaid carer roles and limited education opportunities.

Poverty of opportunity is a major obstacle to achieving equality. Women still undertake the greater share of unpaid care work and household duties. Unpaid care work includes child care, care of older or disabled family members, community and cultural activities. Young women are often expected to undertake family care duties

rather than be in school or training; and, 11.6 per cent of young women are not in employment nor are they in training while 34 per cent are family care givers.

Although over 80 per cent of female school leavers have gained Level 2 National certificate of Education and over 64 per cent of university graduates are women, a woman in her 50s will have 32 per cent less Kiwi Savings (National Saving scheme) than a man of the same age. The motherhood penalty is calculated to be a 4.4 per cent decrease in the hourly wage for women.

A lack of educational qualifications limits opportunities. Over one third (34 per cent) of disabled women have no education qualifications. Fifteen per cent of non-disabled women have no qualifications. Many of these women and girls lack nutritious food and live in overcrowded, unhealthy homes resulting in poor health.

Health and health related issues are always forefront for women. Access to reproductive and related health services is difficult for many women, with those in remote and rural areas experiencing particular difficulties. A significant development has been the supply of free period products in schools and educational facilities, removing the need for girls to stay home from school during their period. Free period products are also available in many public venues with an increasing number of organisations and councils making these items freely available supporting women in their work and public places.

Access to childcare is a significant barrier to women's empowerment and financial independence. Despite subsidised support child care and after school and holiday care are a high cost and often unobtainable for many families. Also, the discrepancy between school and work hours often impacts women's participation in paid employment.

Over recent years apprenticeship training has become free with a focus on encouraging more women and girls to take up traditionally male dominated trades. 15 per cent of the trades workforce is female with 1 in 3 owning their own business. 13 per cent of current apprentices are female. The female trades workforce is more ethnically diverse than the male workforce with tradeswomen considered a safer pair of hands, making three times fewer accident claims compared to their male counterparts.

Gender based violence continues to be a major issue for women in Aotearoa New Zealand. The economic harm from violence against women is around 9 per cent. One in three (33 per cent) New Zealand women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, including psychological abuse this increases to one in two (55 per cent). The increase of online abuse including stalking requires legislation to be updated to address the issue.

Aotearoa New Zealand has faced significant climate related events over the last year. As is well documented women are disproportionately affected by these events where houses and livelihoods are destroyed. Effects continue to impact households throughout the country with many unable to return to their homes several months on. Women are holding families together, supporting children to return to school and providing community support and advocacy in stressful situations.

Technology is widely used and available in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, there are still issues around accessibility for some. Rural women particularly are often faced with poor or lack of connectivity. The importance of connectivity was highlighted when Aotearoa New Zealand was struck by two major climate change related weather events in quick succession. Issues of isolation from these cyclones are still being felt eight months on. Many remote rural families have had to rely on internet connections for contact with wider family, friends and even authorities as

roads were impassible. Continuing extreme weather has further impacted already damaged areas adding to the stress for women and children.

Climate change poses a huge risk to humanity with women and girls facing the greatest impact. Efforts and programmes to address poverty in all forms must be designed within environmentally sustainable parameters and meet the needs of individual women and girls.

Fundamental to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is access to adequately financed gender focussed social support public systems within sustainable infrastructures for all.

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