



## 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 Presbyterian Church (USA) and Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc., 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The Presbyterian Church (USA) and Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Inc., in covenantal relationship, welcome the opportunity to address the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.”

We affirm our core belief that every person is created in the image of God, deserving of dignity and equitable treatment. Through the Matthew 25 initiative, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Presbyterian Women, Inc., address the injustices of structural racism, systemic poverty, climate change, heteropatriarchy, and militarism that impact the most vulnerable communities, especially women and girls. We engage in this work in mutuality and partnership, making space for all people, listening to the voices of peoples long silenced, building together and living into the good news of God’s “kin-dom.”

We believe God calls us to work to end poverty and to create communities of well-being. We believe that God created the world and called it good; that the earth belongs to God; that God tasked the first humans with serving and preserving God’s Creation; and that the prophets called again and again for God’s people to seek well-being and justice for all people.

We believe Jesus Christ models how we are to live in community and to confront systems of injustice, including poverty. Jesus Christ taught us to care for the vulnerable, to be a good neighbor and to provide food to the hungry. We declare that poverty is not a personal problem but a corporate sin and that “a church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only ...enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation.” (PC[USA] Confessions of 1967).

Systemic poverty refers to the economic exploitation of people who are poor through laws, policies, practices, and systems that perpetuate their impoverished status. We live in a world where not all have equal access to education, transportation, fresh food, financial resources, clean air, water, or healthy environments, employment with a living wage, healthcare, benefits, citizenship, affordable housing, and infrastructure including internet access. This lack of access creates generational cycles of poverty and a racial wealth gap that are systemic in nature. An individual cannot change their economic and social location easily by just “working harder.” Meanwhile, the many interlocking disadvantages are often compounded by gender and racial injustice, trauma, violence, immigration status, impacts from climate change and environmental degradation, and other complicating issues.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty and yet have little or no say in the decisions that affect their lives. We believe working to combat gender-based discrimination and heteropatriarchy must include their active and equal participation, without whom no meaningful advancement is possible. Though the United States is becoming an increasingly diverse country, we still live in a society dominated by white cisgender heterosexual males whose characteristic bias is unfavorable toward women, people of different genders, and the LGBTQIA+ community. The context of work for gender equity and freedom from heteropatriarchy is a human situation that extends beyond our nation. In all corners of the world, women experience injustice because they are women. LGBTQIA+ people experience injustice because of their gender and sexual identities. And gender nonbinary people experience injustice because they do not fit into the categories of male or female.

Therefore, we advocate for global economic justice through a range of strategies including racial, gender and environmental justice, care for refugees and immigrants, guaranteed minimum wages and full employment, support for programs that meet the needs of women and children, and welfare reform that neither requires “workfare” nor punishes the poor. In our advocacy, we ensure that the voices of impoverished people enable us to discern and address the root causes of poverty.

Our organizations are actively involved in eradicating systematic poverty by providing grants that support creative new and existing projects that benefit women and children, locally and internationally. Local Presbyterian Women programs include operating food and diaper pantries, distributing health kits and period packs, working with the houseless, childcare and elder care programs, criminal justice education organizations, and employment and literacy training programs. The Self Development of People program provides grants to communities that seek to change structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression, and injustice.

Impacts of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and conflicts have led to millions of people falling into poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. This has led to increased inequality and declining trust in institutions. We recognize that strong public institutions are critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to eradicate systemic poverty. Strong institutions and good governance can ensure delivery of social protections, health coverage, education, skills, decent work, and housing, as well as access to the internet and bridge the digital divide. Furthermore, more gender responsive, inclusive, participatory, representative decision-making institutions can accelerate the progress towards achieving gender equity. Strengthening women’s issues and educating women, particularly young women, to speak out for their rights will be critical to achieving 2030 Agenda.

Financing with a gender perspective is lagging according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. According to United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, programs that tackle structural causes and consequences of gender inequality such as unpaid care work, violence against women, health, education, peace, and security have been underfunded for years. Including women’s voices and providing greater access to these services and resources will ensure successful outcomes for these programs. More investment must be made to fund programs that will promote gender equity. In addition, globally, women’s access to financial services is low. As the United Nations prepares for the Summit of the Future in 2024, the proposed international financing reforms must be gender-responsive and tailored towards women entrepreneurs to ensure women have equal access to financial services and can exercise their agency.

We call upon the Member States and the United Nations to:

Recognize faith communities as integral partners in protection and promotion of human dignity and human rights for women and girls. Already trusted in communities, faith-based organizations can contribute to challenging heteropatriarchal attitudes and practices by promoting women’s participation at all levels of society.

Promote women in leadership and decision-making positions; provide greater access for political participation through gender-responsive and inclusive approaches at all levels; and achieve gender parity at all levels of public institutions and governing boards, including the United Nations.

Repeal discriminatory laws and promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies that support women and girls.

Provide affordable quality education, scholarships, and training opportunities with emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education, to ensure decent work, quality jobs and wage equity.

Engage in listening sessions of the intergenerational voices and perspectives of women and girls, particularly young women, to encourage young women for leadership roles.

Invest in greater financing for programs dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. Facilitate women's economic inclusion, including investment in care economy and support for women entrepreneurs.

Increase funding for digital literacy, education, technology skills development, jobs training, and dependent care assistance for women and girls. Direct financing to communities and countries made most vulnerable by the digital divide.

Depoliticize women's and girl's health and provide equal access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Support and implement policies and laws that guarantee a life free of violence, exploitation, discrimination, and fund programs that educate, train, and provide support to local leaders, and address negative concepts of masculinity which can lead to abuse and violence.

Allow developing countries to use debt service payments for investment in sustainable development especially for gender equality and empowerment for women and girls.

Monitor progress and impact of international financial reforms and financing for development on women and girls using gender-specific indicators and sex-disaggregated data.

Fully implement key UN agreements, including the Beijing Platform for Action and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women, The Addis Ababa Action Agenda Financing for Development, and the UN's Special Procedures mandate on violence against women to ensure discrimination and gender biases are eliminated in local and national laws, policies and customs.

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc.

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