



## **Economic and Social Council**

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

#### **Fifty-eighth session**

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the 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**

### **Statement submitted by International Council on Social Welfare, 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.



## Statement

### Older women and the post-2015 development agenda

The International Council on Social Welfare promotes gender equality for girls and women of all ages. Older women are particularly disadvantaged in relation to poverty and development strategies worldwide. With the continued ageing of the world's population, this must change.

The effect of rapid population ageing across the world is that we are entering into the era of the “age bulge”, where by 2030 there will be more people over 60 than children under 10. By 2050, there will be 2 billion older people on the planet, the majority of whom will be women — current figures show that there are 100 women for every 84 men over the age of 60. For those over 80 years of age, there are 100 women for every 61 older men — and most older women will be living in developing countries. That is why we must ensure that the voices of older women are heard and their participation facilitated in the development of the post-2015 framework.

We support the call for a single universal development framework that takes into account poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, inequality, human rights and global responsibility. Older women are contributors to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Lifetime inequalities of income, education, employment, health, disability and gender are likely to increase with age and must be recognized. Discrimination on the basis of gender and age is still widespread in all regions of the world.

Therefore, to ensure that the post-2015 development framework truly leaves no one behind, is inclusive of older women along with others and addresses the rights and needs of girls and women of all ages, we insist that population dynamics, including global population ageing of women, must be taken into account across all goals, targets and indicators for the post-2015 sustainable development framework to be effective and legitimate.

The International Council on Social Welfare supports universal social protection, considering it a crucial element of people-centred development and an important enabling factor conducive to protecting human rights, developing human potential and reducing income inequalities. In that light, we consider Recommendation No. 202 of the International Labour Conference concerning national floors of social protection, adopted unanimously in mid-June 2012 by the Member States and social partner organizations, to be an important step forward towards universalism in the provision of social protection.

International Labour Organization (ILO) document GB.316/INS/5/1 (and Corr.) summarizes that path-breaking recommendation as follows.

Recommendation No. 202 provides guidance to Members. It sets out that Members should, in accordance with national circumstances, establish, as quickly as possible and maintain their social protection floors comprising basic social security guarantees, which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level. National social protection floors should comprise at least the following social security guarantees:

- access to essential health care for all, including maternity care;

- basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
- basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
- basic income security for older persons.

According to Recommendation No. 202, countries should monitor progress in implementing social protection floors and achieving other objectives of national social security extension strategies. This should include regularly convening national consultations to assess progress and discuss policies for the further horizontal and vertical extension of social security.

The International Council on Social Welfare joined other non-governmental organizations in making the following recommendations to States Members of the United Nations:

- The post-2015 sustainable development framework must be human rights-based for all girls and women of all ages. All goals and their targets must take account of the rights of girls and women of all ages at all stages of their lives. The specific abuse and discrimination faced by older women must be recognized and stopped.
- The “data revolution” called for by the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Secretary-General must give priority to improved data collection and reporting which ensures that all data be collected, disaggregated, analysed and disseminated for all ages up to and over 100, as well as by gender and disability. Goals and targets adopted by Member States must be measurable and accountable to all their citizens, and have specific data on older age groups, including specifically older women. Data must be age disaggregated to show how policies and budgets — including those to ensure regular income, education, decent work, protection in conflict and humanitarian crises and a supportive and safe environment — are delivering to girls and women of all ages across the life course.
- The framework should have a goal of universal social protection and decent work for girls and women of all ages. Social protection and decent work are at the heart of the social contract between the State and its subjects. Social protection floors are rights-based, nationally owned and have clear measurable objectives. They play a distinctive role in poverty eradication and good governance and underpin the realization of multiple goals beyond poverty and inequality.
- Any health goals within the framework should be framed to maximize healthy life expectancy at all stages of life, including universal health coverage to ensure the health of girls and women across the life course. With three quarters of the global burden of chronic and non-communicable disease affecting women and men over the age of 60, special emphasis must be given to diagnosis, care and effective treatment of older people. Older women, who live longer than men with chronic and non-communicable diseases, should be especially targeted.

- The framework should have a gender equality goal with indicators and targets that are inclusive of all people of all ages. Lifetime gender-based inequalities often result in older women experiencing financial and physical abuse and discrimination, along with poor health and increasing disability.

The International Council on Social Welfare recommends the following:

- Recognize age as one of the cross-cutting issues that must be taken into account across all goals and targets for girls and women of all ages
- Create a universal rights-based framework that includes older women
- Eradicate poverty in all its forms for all older women
- Leave no older woman behind by tackling inequality and exclusion, including removing barriers to the full participation of all girls and women of all ages in society regardless of age, disability and gender
- Promote inclusive growth, decent employment, social protection and ensuring access to all for essential services for girls and women of all ages
- Improve health by addressing universal health-care coverage, access and affordability, and address the burden of non-communicable diseases for girls and women of all ages
- Promote better accountability through a “data revolution” with age-disaggregated data to measure and monitor progress by age, gender and disability to capture gaps within and between population groups, specifically including older women.

A post-2015 development agenda should account for a progressively and rapidly ageing world by promoting healthy ageing and economic well-being for women in old age, and by providing enabling and supportive environments where older women are integrated into the development process as an asset rather than a burden.

We look forward to a dynamic and universal response to ageing in the framework. As population structures change, laws, policies, social attitudes and institutional practices must do the same. States Members of the United Nations have a historic opportunity to ensure that the next global development framework takes a life course approach that will help to ensure sustainable and equitable development for girls and women of all ages.

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