



## **Economic and Social Council**

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

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

10-21 March 2014

**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 Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 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**

### **Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls**

As a network of 180 women's rights organizations and movements across 25 countries in the Asia-Pacific region committed to women's human rights and a just and equitable model of development, the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development submits this statement to draw the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women to the need to transform development models. Our statement focuses on the concerns of women who continue to be marginalized by neo-liberal, market-driven development processes and whose experiences illustrate the long road to the full realization of Millennium Development Goal 3, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Women represent 70 per cent of people living in poverty in the Asia-Pacific region. Without a model of development that addresses the growing inequalities in wealth, power, resources and opportunities that exist between and within countries, rural, indigenous, urban poor and migrant women in the Asia-Pacific region will continue to bear the burden of unsustainable economic growth and environmental crises despite the fact that they are least responsible. A new framework of development justice is required to secure women's human rights and a sustainable future for all.

#### **Challenges faced by women in the Asia-Pacific region**

##### **Land**

- Although women make up the overwhelming majority of subsistence farmers and agricultural producers in the region, only 5 per cent of agricultural holdings are held by women.
- Laws and cultural practices continue to hinder women's access to and ownership of land and agricultural resources.
- Women's reliance on agricultural work also renders them vulnerable to losing their homes and livelihoods because of environmental disasters and government and corporate land grabbing. Approximately 19.2 million ha of land in Asia have been acquired in deals involving foreign investors in the last decade.

##### **Labour**

- Asia has the highest gender pay gap in the world. Women's labour in the region is vastly undervalued and, in addition to working far below subsistence wages in intolerable conditions, women workers are frequently denied the right to organize and bargain.
- Nearly two thirds of women work in vulnerable employment that lacks basic security, benefits and working conditions.
- Many women domestic workers in the region — domestic work accounts for about one third of all female employment in Asia — are denied labour rights, separated from their families and routinely abused and exploited.

### **Violence against women**

- Violence against women remains widespread, systematic and culturally entrenched in the region. Women experience violence on a continuum that spans daily acts of harassment to murder, femicide and the disappearance of women. The Pacific Islands are reported to have the highest rate of peacetime violence in the world, with 69 per cent of women experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence.
- Violence against women deepens poverty among women as it reduces their opportunities for employment and causes long-term physical and psychological health problems.
- At home and at work, women's rights, their claim to substantive equality and their autonomy over their bodies and decision-making are violated.

### **Post-2015 development agenda**

The dominant development framework of the past 30 years, led by international financial institutions and wealthy nations, is premised on the stimulation of economic growth by deregulating industry, privatizing public assets and encouraging foreign direct investment. This approach conflates growth with development, despite evidence that this approach has channelled wealth from developing countries to rich countries, magnified inequalities, lowered real wages, increased labour migration and caused environment, food and energy crises that enormously impact the lives of women in the global South.

While the Millennium Development Goals have served as an important influence on national and international development strategies, they have not adequately addressed the structural causes of poverty and inequalities or the inequitable and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

The reports that have been tabled to guide the Secretary-General's reports have failed to fully recognize that women constitute the majority of the world's poor, make up the majority of workers in the most vulnerable sectors (domestic work, the garment industry and subsistence agriculture) and suffer disproportionately from climate disasters. Women need more than non-discrimination measures. They need real economic transformation, redistribution and justice. They need to have a genuine say over development, their communities and global systems. They have a right to bodily autonomy and self-determination.

Women's rights and gender equality and justice must be cornerstones of a new development justice model, which should be framed by five foundational shifts:

- Redistributive justice, which aims to redistribute resources, wealth, power and opportunities to all people equitably.
- Economic justice, which aims to develop economies that enable dignified lives, accommodate needs and facilitate capabilities, employment and livelihoods that are available to all.
- Social justice, which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.
- Environmental justice, which recognizes the historical responsibility and corresponding obligations of countries and societies whose patterns of

production and consumption have principally contributed to environmental crises disproportionately affecting communities in the global South.

- Accountability to people, which requires democratic and just governance that makes institutions accountable to all people and enables people to make informed decisions over their own lives.

On the basis of these five principles, we call upon States to commit to developing ambitious, transformative goals and draw attention to five elements critical to a transformative agenda:

- Reducing inequalities of wealth, power and resources between countries and between rich and poor: the goal should aim to reform international trade and financial systems that channel funds from developing countries to developed countries and should ensure that the means of implementation of an ambitious global development framework are sourced from global revenue and progressive taxation. The targets should not continue to use the starvation measurement of \$1.25 per day.
- Creating sustainable economies: economic control should be returned to people and accountable Governments. Targets should be set for the elimination of corporate subsidies; progressive tax reform; local, productive and sustainable economies over speculative economies; the elimination of transfer pricing; and the distribution of profits within local economies.
- Equitable access to and control over land and resources: targets to redistribute access to and control over land and productive resources should be established and address both women's unequal access to and control over land and the monopolization of land by corporations and wealthy landowners.
- Decent work and a living wage: a development framework that aims to ensure that workers, families and communities can live in dignity must incorporate a target that realistically values labour and sets targets to improve living and working conditions. This target should focus on a living wage, namely a wage that can support a family to live in dignity, and abolish exploitative minimum wages. Furthermore, targets should be set to redistribute the burden of unpaid care labour between women and men.
- Peace and justice: Governments must develop comprehensive and fully funded national plans of action to eliminate violence against women. Plans must seek to prevent violence by shifting entrenched discriminatory beliefs, practices and stereotypes; legislating to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished; providing services to women survivors and their families; and providing reparations to women survivors. Targets to reduce military spending should be included.
- Voice: women's participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels is a fundamental prerequisite for the enjoyment of women's rights, gender equality, sustainable development and genuine democracy. Governments and development institutions must ensure that women, especially rural, indigenous and migrant women, not only are present in formal processes but also contribute their perspectives and recommendations on decision-making at all levels of development processes.

- Universal public services and social protection: Governments should ensure a dignified standard of living regardless of a person's employment, citizenship or other status. This includes providing education and health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health care; water; sanitation; and sustainable energy.
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