



## 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 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals mark an important step forward in the commitment of governments to work together to address social and economic inequality, including gender inequality, and to advance a more just and sustainable model of development. Given the multiple and intersecting crises undermining the livelihoods of women and girls worldwide — including climate change arising from extraction and overconsumption, growing fundamentalisms, and global financial and economic instability — the implementation of these commitments is urgent, together with a determination to address the root causes of inequality.

### **Implementation and accountability**

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda is not the first time that governments have pledged to address inequality and put an end to the systematic discrimination and human rights violations experienced by women. 2015 marked the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action, a far more expansive and detailed global agenda for the realization of the human rights of women and girls. However, as Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and other women's movement repeatedly observed, governments have largely failed to convert the rhetoric in the Beijing Platform into reality.

Governments are yet to assure women's movements that their approach to the Sustainable Development Goals will be different. First, the process of developing indicators for the goals and targets has revealed a clear intention to narrow and distort some of the more ambitious targets, including those in Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the targets that measure women's access to decent work and the targets on economic inequality. Civil society has been largely excluded from the development of these indicators, even though they will ultimately shape the priorities of governments in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Second, governments have failed to develop a robust process for accountability for their commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals. Instead, the monitoring and review process is set to comprise of voluntary, State-led presentations of progress under the Agenda. This fails to even reach the level of rigour and accountability used in other United Nations processes, such as the Human Rights Council. While much has been made of the role of civil society in monitoring the progress of governments, this is difficult to reconcile with an ongoing erosion of the space for women's movements led by repressive governments and conservative forces in many communities and countries.

### **Financing the Sustainable Development Goals**

Another major impediment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is the lack of commitment by governments to financing. Without adequate financing for an agenda that is expected to cost at least USD\$3 trillion per year to implement, the Sustainable Development Goals will remain commitments on paper only. The failure of political will to finance the Agenda was most evident in the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which wholly failed to deliver the means of

implementation of the new Agenda. It did not result in a single new financial commitment, despite the extraordinary shortfall in financing for development. This shortfall is not only caused by the deliberate failure of developed countries to meet their obligation of committing 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Income to official development assistance, but also to global financial, trade and taxation architecture that strips developing countries of their resources, including through illicit financial flows that costs countries up to ten times as much as they receive in aid. This makes a mockery of the Global Partnership for development embodied in the means of implementation goal and that governments have pledged to uphold since the Millennium Declaration 15 years ago. Many of the targets in the Sustainable Development Goals that pertain to women's rights require the provision of services and social and economic infrastructure, such as universal social protection, health care, education, and childcare facilities. In the absence of financing, it will prove practically impossible for governments — particularly developing country governments — to meet their commitments.

### **The need for structural change**

Even if governments were to work in good faith to implement the commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals, it is difficult to see how this will create the structural reforms necessary to shift a fundamentally inequitable global economic and financial model. The concentration of women in exploitative, vulnerable forms of work; their loss of land to profit-seeking companies and governments; and the destruction of environments on which women rely for their livelihoods will not be redressed by prescriptions for more of the same policies that powerful governments and international financial institutions have promoted for the last two decades. However, the Sustainable Development Goals promote the same agenda of trade liberalization, privatization, and financialization that have created unprecedented levels of inequality within and between countries. Even more concerning is the significant role the Sustainable Development Goals create for big business in financing and implementing the goals, despite the central and recent role that the private sector has played in precipitating the climate crisis and the global financial crisis; mounting evidence that public-private partnerships in development assistance do not work; and the role that the private sector continues to play in undermining attempts to align its activity with binding human rights standards. Further, the Agenda welcomes the private sector's role in the absence of binding frameworks to ensure that businesses do not violate human rights or exacerbate the financial vulnerability of governments.

It is therefore clear that the Sustainable Development Goals alone will be insufficient to deliver a model of development that will remedy the concentration of wealth, power and resources in the hands of a few; the steady destruction of our planet; and the persistent and entrenched levels of inequality that women and girls face in every aspect of their lives. The women's movement in Asia and the Pacific will advocate for those goals and targets that will advance women's human rights and gender equality, including the commitments made to ensure women's access to land; value and share unpaid work; ensure decent work for women; and reduce inequalities. Indeed, without a local women's movement it is unlikely that these targets can be achieved, as autonomous feminist movements have been shown to be the key drivers of progressive policy on women's rights at a national level.

However, we believe that to achieve a truly equitable, sustainable model of development, governments must commit to development justice. Development justice is based on five transformative shifts:

- Redistributive justice, which requires a redistribution of wealth, power and resources between developed and developing countries.
- Economic justice, which aims to develop economies that provide decent and dignified work and livelihoods for all.
- Social and gender justice, which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.
- Environmental justice, which recognizes the historical responsibility of developed countries and elites within countries whose production and consumption patterns have led to immense environmental degradation and associated human rights violations.
- Accountability to peoples, which requires democratic and just governance that enables people to make informed decisions over their own lives.

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