



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 November 2016

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-first session

13-24 March 2017

**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 International Federation of Social Workers, 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.

* The present document is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The International Federation of Social Workers supports the empowerment of women in the changing world of work in conjunction with the theme of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The International Federation of Social Workers proposes using social protection systems and mechanisms to alleviate poverty, and propel economic forces in communities across the globe, creating a more just world for women in the workforce. The Federation promotes social work practice and ethics worldwide with aims to advocate for social justice, human rights and social development for all, (International Federation of Social Workers, 2016).

The Federation consists of 116 member associations, representing a voice for social workers across the world. The International Federation of Social Workers establishes a network of associations that seek to advance the mission of promoting social work and empirically based best practice models, and in facilitating international collaboration (International Federation of Social Workers, 2016). In concurrence with the United Nations 2030 Global Agenda, the Federation is committed towards social justice, and universal implementation of human rights; building the wealth of social initiatives and social movements (Global Agenda for Social Work & Social Development, 2012). The Federation stands to uphold the rights of women to fair, formal, decent work, and pathways that lead to such.

Issues

Economic Empowerment

The commitment to advance gender equality requires directing focus to human rights and eliminating barriers such as wage gaps, lack of access to information and technologies, gender discrimination, and insufficient access to credit and capital accumulation mechanisms. Women in the world of work bear additional inadequate sharing of family responsibilities combined with a lack of or insufficient services such as child care (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995).

Employment for women remains to be a critical element for development and a foundation for equality as long as wages are adequate for basic living standards and provides a safe environment that promotes social protection (UN Women, 2016). The Federation affirms to strengthen the capacity of communities to interact with their governments to extend social and economic development, human rights, human welfare, peace and the enhancement of the human potential and well-being of all people (IFSW, 2012). This can be achieved by utilizing social protection systems. Social protection is regarded as an insurance against poverty and a mechanism that supports economic growth, (European Report on Development, n.d.). Social protection includes the supply of social rights, services, goods and transfers to be delivered in cash or in kind to provide minimum income and livelihood for all, (ILO, & WHO, 2010). Social protection is key to the advancement and transformation of communities, and a method by which governments and societies can realize and access human rights, and in this context, women's rights.

Additionally, multilateral agencies, governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector have embraced women's access to economic empowerment.

Companies benefit from leadership opportunities and view this as an occasion to unleash the economic power and potential of women (UN Women, 2016). Thus, the International Federation of Social Workers upholds the empowerment of women in the workplace as a means of achieving economic equality for all.

Gender Equality

In accordance with the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Federation of Social Workers believes in the equal rights of men and women. Across the globe, gender equality is an issue that touches workplaces and households, from the agricultural industry to unpaid care work to wage work, and beyond. In most countries, women earn on average 60-75 percent of men's wages, and are more likely to engage in informal forms of work, sometimes unpaid (UN Women, 2015). The International Federation of Social Workers firmly supports economic equality for men and women in the world of work by closing the employment participation gap, and wage gap. Moreover, the International Federation of Social Workers calls for the implementation of policies, programs and plans to advance equality in the workplace, and foster an environment of inclusion.

Furthermore, gender equality and the empowerment of women is a pivotal platform for action on the Sustainable Development Goals, (UN, 2015). The International Federation of Social Workers recognizes the interconnections between the empowerment of women and girls and the other Sustainable Development Goals, and believes that to see progress in other areas of the Global Goals, it is essential for gender equality to be of utmost priority.

Education, Training, and Professional Development

Education is a fundamental human right, (UDHR, 1948). Gender disparities in education, training, and professional development affect the lifelong economic well-being of women and their families (IFSW, 2012). In a world where literacy rates in developing and least developed countries continue to discriminate against girls, the International Federation of Social Workers urges for accessible, safe, equal and adequate education for all.

In today's globalized economy, women face pervasive gender segregation in the labour markets. Gender bias and lack of educational opportunity and diversity lead to an overrepresentation of men and women in particular types of jobs. Thus, leaving little room for opportunities in obverse fields. This, in particular, limits economic growth opportunity for women, (ILO, 2012). The International Federation of Social Workers supports equal access to literacy, vocational and information technology training, as well as entrepreneurship and leadership programs for women as a means of addressing the employment participation gap, and engaging female representation in all fields.

Safety and Health in the Workplace

Women's safety and well-being continue to be a prominent commitment of the International Federation of Social Workers and the Commission on the Status of Women. It is recognized that 40-50 percent of women in European Union countries have experienced sexual advancements or similar forms of sexual harassment in the workplace (Unite To End Violence Against Women, 2013). Furthermore, the effects

of gender-based violence within the workplace or outside of it, leave a negative impact financially and impedes on women and girls' empowerment, human rights, and freedom. More so, gender-based violence detracts from workplace productivity by means of influencing absenteeism, employee turnover and resignations, which in turn infringe on women's livelihoods. The International Federation of Social Workers supports the Commission on the Status of Women in embracing progress made towards the adoption of laws, policies, and collection of data that establishes protection and support on violence against women in all forms, (UN Women, 2012).

The International Federation of Social Workers commends progress towards advocating policies and programs that promote social action and well-being of women of all ages (IFSW, 2012). The Federation remains diligent to work with global stakeholders to bridge gender gaps and uphold human rights, human welfare, and peace.

Summary and Recommendations

To achieve the goals set forth by the United Nations 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, women and girls' equality must be placed at the forefront of the political platform. Removing barriers that impact basic human rights and welfare would give women the opportunity to flourish. Hereinafter, the International Federation of Social Workers supports the Commission on the Status of Women, and makes the following recommendations:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of women and girls as a top priority in achieving gender equality, and fostering an environment of non-violence in our world; recognizing that any advancement in human rights and social justice must truly be equal for all.
- Globally ratify and implement protocols, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, urging politicians and government leaders to address gender discrimination in the workplace and beyond.
- Utilize Social Protection Systems as a means of combating injustice faced by women across the globe; recognizing that Social Protection Systems should be implemented as a preventative measure to address root causes of poverty in every community.
- Implement policies, programs and plans, such as the Women's Empowerment Principles, as a means of closing the gender wage gap and employment participation gap. Empower women to join all fields of the workforce, and to realize and achieve their educational and vocational goals.
- Launch resources for literacy, vocational and information technology training as a stepping stone to eliminating barriers for women to joining the workforce, and reaching their full potential.
- Increase access to credit and capital accumulation mechanisms for economic empowerment for women and their families.
- Establish entrepreneurship and leadership programs for women and girls to equip them to be a vital part of decision-making in the home, community, workplace, and political arena.