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Statement submitted by Asia Pacific Women’s Watch, 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 statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Women's economic rights in the changing world: better policy and real means of implementation

The Beijing Platform for Action played a significant role in the Asia-Pacific region and many achievements were reached in the area of women's rights within the framework of Beijing Platform for Action and National Plans of Actions for gender equality. Lessons from the 20 years of the Beijing Platform for Action implementation inform that only collective and coherent actions may improve women's lives.

Women's economic empowerment within the current neoliberal ideology remains a major challenge for many women. The Sustainable Development Goals provide an opportunity for addressing some of these challenges, in particular mainstreaming of gender equality in economic and financial spheres.

Asia Pacific Women Watch supports the establishment of Sustainable Development Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and urges governments and the United Nations to also push for gender equality and gender mainstreaming across all of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Women need not only policy changes but adequate means of implementation, especially resourcing. It is recognised that States, as well as donors may have good policies, legislation and strategies, but fail in their means of implementation. Implementation should be more effective and efficient targeting the most marginalised and vulnerable.

To ensure economic security for women there needs to be an adequate and transparent level of accountability by all State, non-state and development actors in the region.

Negative economic impacts on women leads to increased vulnerability and discrimination of women, increases the feminization of poverty and can result in dramatic migration of women whose vulnerability further increases.

Increasing the number of women in small business and supporting women's entrepreneurship is one way to increase economic security for women and their families.

To ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in all spheres including political, economic and public life gender equality needs to be up front and central in all national plans of action and on women's rights and gender equality in all countries of the world. While many countries in the world have gender policy, there is a need for stronger gender equality legislation and more effective gender responsive budgetary systems.

Decent work with equal pay for equal work should be among national development priorities with sufficient funding and capacity building programs, as well as with high level of access to new technologies.

While the issue of casual labour is predominantly identified as being a "rural issue", the increase of women in casual labour extends and places the engendering

of the casual labour force as a structural barrier to predictable income and decent work, and a major issue for women.

Domestic, family and kinship group violence has a severe effect on the attendance, performance, safety and consequently the productivity of a woman whether she has children or not.

Access to Sexual and reproductive services is essential for women. There is an urgent need to address and limit negatively increasing influence of religious groups and conservative political parties to impede access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Increasing women in high economic and financial positions can play a significant role in the economy of the country.

We call for governments, private sector and civil society to:

- Undertake gender budgeting and increase budget allocation for women's economic empowerment at all levels.
- To scale up and speed up effective strategies to support women's involvement in small business and supporting women entrepreneurs.
- Increase strategies to support economic security for women in rural areas.
- Support strategies to increase women's economic empowerment and resilience in disaster and conflict affected areas.
- Undertake a high level of accountability, and work with feminist organisations to ensure effective measurement of women's economic empowerment including measuring asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective, and women's engagement in agriculture.
- Measuring and valuing time use and unpaid work.
- A strong gender indicators framework for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and data disaggregation so that no one is left behind.
- Take steps towards ensuring 50:50 leadership by 2030 in all financial institutions and decision making mechanisms and structures at all level.
- Take affirmative or special measures to increase capital for women's run businesses.
- Create gender friendly enabling environment for women to be formal economic actor.
- To provide and ensure funding from the state budget through compulsory health insurance mechanisms procurement of contraceptives and other sexual and reproductive health services especially for the most vulnerable and at risk of maternal death women including the poor, young people under 18 years old, people with disabilities, women with complications that affect the quality of pregnancy and delivery.
- For the strengthening and establishment of effective health infrastructure in countries the region.

We urge States:

- To consider e-policy changes, accompanied by an effective means of implementation, including adequate finances, and that involve a regular results based accountability from all development actors, based on national and local women's needs.
- In their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to strengthen and upgrade National Action Plans for women's rights and gender equality adequate attention to implementation of target 5.a, 5 b, and 5c of the "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"
- To undertake reforms to improve women's equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- To enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- To adopt and strengthen sound policies, enforceable legislation and effective strategies for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels
- To recognize the role of caring responsibilities on women's economic empowerment and to, address the gender pay gap
- To urgently act on to stop violence against women and girls
