



## Economic and Social Council

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### 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 Equality Now, 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

Equality Now, an international human rights organization, calls on all member states at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that girls are allowed to grow up to become economically empowered women with all their rights promoted and protected by law.

UN-Women in its report, *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, and The World Bank in its report, *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal*, have shown clearly that without good laws and access to justice, women and girls have no formal recourse for violations of their rights and cannot fully participate in society, including in the changing world of work. This hurts them, their families and societies and hinders sustainable development. Equality Now's report, *Words & Deeds, Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing +20 Review Process*, also gives specific examples of sex discriminatory laws affecting women and girls' economic rights. Legal equality, on the other hand, gives women and girls an equal opportunity to build up their capabilities and is an essential component to meeting the agreed upon Sustainable Development Goals in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* ("Agenda 2030") adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.

We heartily welcome the endorsement by member states of Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in Agenda 2030, and strong targets, including targets 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere and 5.a. Undertake reforms to give women 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. We also welcome member states' call for the elimination of discriminatory laws, contained in Goal 10's target 10.3, Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard, and their commitment to the promotion of the rule of law and access to justice in Goal 16's target 16.3.

International legal frameworks and commitments make a difference in the lives of women and girls only to the extent that they are actually implemented at the national level. In 2016, governments began adopting indicators to measure progress towards achieving these goals and targets. Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, has been selected as Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1 to track progress in implementation of target 5.1. The repeal of sex discriminatory laws is an extremely important element of this indicator that affects virtually every part of a girl and woman's life — education, health, employment, security, citizenship, property inheritance and ownership, marriage and right to divorce — including, whether she is economically empowered or not.

We call upon member states to re-energize their efforts and uphold their commitments to the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, including by accelerating their efforts to repeal or amend all sex discriminatory laws as soon as possible and to undertake legal reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources. This would be one very concrete way of realizing the commitment to promoting both gender equality and the rule of law.