



## 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 International Council of Women and World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations, non-governmental organizations 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 World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations, as an international body embracing women's organizations throughout the Ukrainian diaspora and working in solidarity with the women of Ukraine, identifies the employment and work opportunities of women in the homeland and the diaspora to be a critical concern. Our member organizations unite women who identify as Ukrainian in established ethnic minority communities of the world where they contribute to the national and global economies in professional careers or businesses, or as temporary migrants seeking remittance-generating work or in hopes of establishing themselves in a new life outside of Ukraine. The World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations is eager to see the enhancement of their work engagement and strengthening of their economic empowerment.

The priority theme to be taken up by this 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women — “women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work” — is of particular significance to us. We are profoundly concerned with the circumstances of women's empowerment in a time of conflict in Ukraine. In relation to our advocacy for the status of women living as citizens of Ukraine, we are particularly concerned about the situation of women who are internally displaced by the war being waged against Ukraine. Because of their dislocation, internally displaced persons are confronted with enormous obstacles to adequate employment as part of access to basic life necessities, and present a tremendous challenge to Ukraine in its national action plan to fulfil its commitment to bringing the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 to its people.

In addition, the emerging theme being considered by this 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women — the empowerment of indigenous women — relates directly to the situation of the Crimean Tatar women and their role in the reclaiming of their homeland territory from forcible occupation and illegal annexation by the Russian Federation. During last year's Commission on the Status of Women, the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations co-sponsored parallel and side events considering the obstacles faced by internally displaced women and the problem of how the agreed upon development goals were to be reached in the face of these apparent setbacks and complications.

While women living in Ukraine still contend with lingering stereotypes that serve to define and limit their options, the government of Ukraine has a strong legislative framework regarding equal rights and opportunities for women and men and is paying attention to the incorporation of institutional mechanisms for achievement of gender equality. Ukraine has made significant progress even during the past year, having approved a national strategy for human rights reflecting a commitment to combatting gender-based violence and addressing gender equality. Ukraine also recently has made headway in enhancing business opportunities for women by addressing reforms of its public procurement system in accordance with international standards. While Ukraine is still lagging in the numbers of elected and appointed government officials, the Ukrainian Parliament has a female First Deputy and an active inter-party caucus focusing on gender equality and inclusion of women in Ukraine's political life. There is a deeper appreciation globally and in Ukraine of the fact that legislatures with an increased number of parliamentarians

will more quickly adopt policies promoting gender equality and promote the adoption of measures to correct institutional and systemic barriers that still prevent women's equal access to politics.

In February 2016, Ukraine launched its National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women Peace and Security. This decision place Ukraine in a unique position — the first country to have written and adopted its National Action Plan during an ongoing conflict. The National Action Plan should serve to make widely understood that women must be included in all areas of decision-making as a matter of course and as self-evident necessity.

Ukraine faces a most complex challenge in addressing the needs of the 1.8 million people internally displaced by the war of aggression on Ukraine's eastern regions (including the heavily populated Donbas) and the occupation of Crimea. The majority of those displaced are women and their dependents. Ukraine's women are conspicuously pro-active in taking on the burdens of caring for victims of war, as they are active in both the military service, and overwhelmingly in the peaceful volunteer movement, that is providing the bulk of humanitarian aid and support. Women's economic empowerment would seem unattainable in relation to war-displaced women taking care of their families while uprooted and facing deprivation. Ukraine is continuing to take its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals seriously as it addresses the needs of the displaced persons.

Many families cope with their failing economic opportunities by relying on a member working as a migrant. According to a United Nations Migration Report, Ukraine has one of the largest migrant diasporas of the world (nearly 6 million), 57% of which are women (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016). A large percentage of these are involved in care-taking work (of children or the elderly) for the families of their host societies. While we are grievously concerned about the disruption of family life that results from and the potential neglect of economic issues contributing to this pattern, we also welcome the finding of a March 2016 study by the International Trade Union Confederation that an increase in public investment in social infrastructure (including better security for workers in care and health services) would spur an increase in economic stability even in this time of low economic growth, high unemployment and gender inequality. The study demonstrates that achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals need not be sacrificed as unattainable due to economic and political difficulties. The goals can be achieved through attention to human basic needs and gender parity, in keeping with the statement by the Secretary-General that "expanding women's economic opportunities is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and his optimism that "the potential gains for basic human rights, for human development and for economic growth have never been larger."

The hope would be that whether internally displaced or refugee or voluntary migrant, persons seeking employment and livelihood would find access to decent work and security in each country of the world. The international community has long recognized the fundamental problem of exploitation and pay discrimination. Faithful adherence to the Equal Remuneration Convention (the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention no. 100 of 1951 which as of May 2016 is ratified by

172 of 187 ILO member states) should eradicate the discrepancies between male and female remuneration, which still widely exists due to the residual sexism and racism of our societies. Women's contributions to care taking of the young infirm and elderly are still not compensated, resulting in a global gender disadvantage, which manifests in women's poverty. It is heartening that professional attention is being given to the problem of how women in all societies might move from lives of performing largely unpaid informal work to lives performing valued remunerated recognized decent formal work in work places free of violence and exploitation. Still to be adequately addressed are attitudes towards women, because women of all ages in the continuum of life suffer globally from the stereotypes applied to them and girls often still suffer from inculcated ingrained self-images of diminished value.

We welcome the examination of the changing circumstances of work that present different challenges. We welcome initiatives of the public sector to implement policies to promote inclusive growth and women's economic empowerment through employment and procurement practices; we are eager to see businesses change their culture and practices on the model of gender parity-promoting models; and we are ready to join in the collective advocacy being spearheaded by women's groups. Most of all, we look forward to gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development based on the commitment to gender equality and women's economic empowerment through the protection, promotion and realization of women's and girls' human and workplace rights.

World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

Co-signed by the International Council of Women

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