



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 December 2017

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-second session

12–23 March 2018

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 Network of Liberal Women, 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

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved if women in rural areas have an equal role in the productive sectors and are able to chart their own paths that empower women and girls lives.

International Network of Liberal Women is a network of women worldwide whose main objective is to advance the empowerment of all women and girls worldwide and to develop women's awareness of their rights and political, economic, social and cultural responsibilities. The network, which reinforces relationships and exchanges among women all over the world, believes there is a rich opportunity for women on all levels, especially through liberalism, to come together and share expertise for mutual benefit and empowerment of all women and girls.

Gender equality is not a threat to family values or simply about giving a woman a spot at the imaginary table but about getting women and girls the right education, their place in the workforce and their role in the economy and especially about getting enough women in positions of leadership. There is a long way to go in gender equality if we speak about leadership positions, which are so necessary for innovative development.

International Network of Liberal Women asks to increase investment in developing rural areas. By looking for more innovated solutions and driving attention and resources to innovative agricultural products and services, women's and girls' lives will be empowered more easily and more durably.

Women and girls represent half the population. International Network of Liberal Women believes that women in rural areas are needed in the workforce now more than ever and should in fact surpass the amount of men. To have women and girls representing more than half the workforce in rural areas in countries all over the world, they will need to be educated through mobile learning and better communication in modern agricultural techniques, computer science and technology.

Over the past years, women and girls entrepreneurs have met with many difficulties in growing their business and creating jobs in cutting-edge fields such as promoting health and science and technology, as well as in agricultural and manufacturing areas.

In her statement for the International Day of Rural Women on October 15, 2017, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted the importance of the social and physical infrastructure that enables rural women's participation in sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural production, processing, transport and marketing.

Women and girls and women with a disability will benefit through enhancing women's agricultural and manufacturing skills as well as from investments in research and inventions. This can impact their experiences, through learning opportunities, financial aid or support networks, apps offering tailored training and job opportunities for business women, all according to their needs.

However, women and girls should also take a bigger part in innovation and investment. This will result in two different positive developments. Entrepreneurs will realize that engaging women and girls in innovative ideas and education will tap into new market opportunities. And this empowerment of creative women and girls will lead them to be self-sufficient and independent individuals.

Let us not forget though the hundreds and millions of rural vulnerable women and girls who day in day out are exposed to violence, especially when they still have to walk long distances to collect water and are even forced into child marriages. To

earn a better income the rural women and girls in those parts of the countries are still selling water, vegetables, meals and household articles and doing domestic work such as sewing, chicken farming and baking, to sustain their rural households as they are the daily providers in their homes and communities. One of their biggest problems is the fact that they did not have access to any educational programs in their areas.

Also climate catastrophes in the world are causing big damages to the agriculture, leading to lack of water and energy, failed crops and hungry populations, which are fast growing. These results of climate change are impairing economic progress and poverty alleviation. The growing impact of climate change is exacerbating these challenges and risks pushing millions more into abject poverty and hunger. And as always, it is the world's poorest, often women, who are paying the highest price.

In the past few years International Network of Liberal Women believes that the women and girls starting businesses have profited from the new innovative ideas and structures, which have been introduced, such as micro-financing and sometimes juridical ownership of land, houses, offices and products which should be further improved to help women developing their businesses in especially in the rural area.

We see that the challenges that women are facing are huge, but fortunately we are not starting from scratch. With the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, world leaders have adopted a compelling vision with ambitious goals. The role of governments is vital in implementing those commitments. But it is not governments' responsibility alone. It requires cooperation and partnership between every sector of the society.

Just like other women organisations around the world, International Network of Liberal Women is confident that the economic situation of women is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which recognizes that women's full and equal participation in the economy is a vital step toward achieving sustainable development and their goals.

It will need all networks of governments, businesses, investors, science and civil society to work together to achieve women's full and equal participation in the economy.

There is clearly an ambitious agenda ahead of us, but the International Network of Liberal Women is confident that the women and girls can turn aspiration into action and build a more prosperous and sustainable world. Their leadership, actions and ideas must be given an important role in these effort.

International Network of Liberal Women therefore calls upon:

United Nations to adopt an ideal platform of innovation to strategize on how to contribute and strengthen the women and girls in rural areas around the world.

United Nations to adopt organisations and to aid the economies need to do more to empower women and girls in every way so that they can be aware of their own potential. This means we need to make it possible to empower women and girls in rural areas to work equally in all the productive sectors.

United Nations to convince all Governments, business, investors, science and civil society of States to sign and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.