



**Women's Major Group  
2020 High Level Political Forum**

**General Debate Statement**

**“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of  
action and delivery for sustainable development”**

**July 3, 2020**

Our Concerns - The Context

Ten years left to realise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is so much more to be done to ensure no one is left behind for advancement and prosperity for all humanity. COVID-19 pandemic has given the world a huge lesson to be learned and reflected on - in order to rebuild and reconstruct the fragile system that has caused failures in ensuring equality, security, and safety for all. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, 2020 is a critical year to reduce inequalities, address systemic and structural barriers and underlying human rights concerns to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind as we move forward with the 2030 Agenda.

Long before the global pandemic that has exacerbated the threats and challenges of women and girls in various aspects of social and economic development, a broad range of unsolved issues have been pushing the women and girls off the edge of survival and thrift such as unjust global economic governance focuses on profit, wealth inequalities, corporate power, devaluation of women's work, unpaid care work, overrepresentation in informal jobs, militarism and conflicts, sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination and criminalization of sexuality, and threats from harmful traditions and cultural practices,

among others. This has further marginalized women and girls, including those with disabilities, and also those belonging to the minority groups such as refugees, displaced women and girls and those in humanitarian crisis situations, who are already deprived of universal and equitable access to basic necessities.

In times of COVID-19, it has become more necessary than ever for States to prioritize all 17 Sustainable Development Goals without any compromise, neglect, or change to any part of the Agenda. This is important for addressing the impact of the pandemic, especially with regards to reducing inequalities in ensuring accessibility and availability of health and protecting the socio-economic situation of women, especially younger women. This is the time to acknowledge the critical role that reduced income inequality can play in amplifying the effects of economic growth in eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.

Overall, more attention should be paid to implementing and reporting on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, a goal that is paid least attention in the voluntary national reviews over the past years.

Governments should also protect and enhance civil society space, and protect the lives of environmental and women human rights defenders by holding non-state actors accountable for human rights violations perpetrated against them. Collective action is of paramount importance to dismantle the barriers to the advancement of the rights of women and girls namely, fundamentalism and systems of oppression from patriarchy to neoliberal capitalism to militarism.

This also calls for States to renew their commitment to democracy, against counteracting political parties and fundamentalist groups that target marginalized, vulnerable and minority groups through their hate speeches against women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual, intersex and queer people, migrants, and racialized people, among others.

#### Key recommendations:

We, therefore, urge the government of Member States to take the following steps:

- Establish voluntary national reviews covering the contribution of non-state actors and broadening the space for civil society and regional dialogues focusing on implementing these goals and take

the voluntary national reviews from its current context being a government-led document to multilateral and participatory strategic national document.

- Create accelerators for building synergies across the macroeconomic, social, and environmental dimensions and offer recommendations to inform the discussions of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council.
- Consider the high economic, social, and environmental benefits of rapid and sustained reductions in carbon dioxide emissions aligned with the 1.5 celsius goal to limit the global temperature rise which would entail reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.
- Renew and reinforce their commitments to all Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030, including the need to improve public health care services and eliminate all forms of privatization of health services.
- Take action on the least addressed issues, such as non-discriminatory and uninterrupted access to sexual and reproductive health rights, essential services and information, especially in the context of increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, maternal mortality rates, unsafe abortion and early and unintended pregnancy arising from child, early and forced marriage and unions among other factors.
- Create synergies to advance the Global North-South and South-South Cooperation.
- Increase the accessibility and availability of formal and informal educational resources, including e-learning, and provide free education to all children from all intersections.
- Create space for young people in the decision-making process in the United Nations mechanism and urges States to promote youth mobilization at the community level.
- Take measures in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of laws and policies against sexual and gender-based violence, abolish/repeal discriminatory, harmful traditional and cultural practices, and decriminalize laws on sexuality.

- Create a wider scope for generating support for the human rights defenders including feminists, women groups, environmental and front-line human rights defenders from intimidation, retaliation, and a threat to their safety security.
- Generate accessible funds for the COVID-19 recovery plans specially designed for marginalized groups and groups in vulnerable situations.
- Place gender equality and human rights (of women and girls in all their diversity) at the heart of all government initiatives and take a feminist, intersectional and ‘whole of society’ approach at all levels of the policy solutions and decision-making, including in peacebuilding process, to account for multiple intersecting identities, from class, caste, race, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic and other structural conditions - situated in lived realities of all especially women.
- Ensure that women's rights defenders and the feminist movement are an essential part of the responses and measures implemented after the COVID-19 emergency to enable the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.