



Statement of the International Federation of University Women at the 46th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, Agenda item 4

Thank you, Mr Chairman

Speaking on behalf of the International Federation of University Women, which has members in over sixty countries, including both countries of origin and host countries, we are heartened that so many delegations have acknowledged that women and young people comprise a significant proportion of migrants within and between countries.

It must be recognized, however, that nearly all migrants have a major factor in common – they leave their homes for a better life elsewhere. For many, however, they find out that the ‘streets are not paved with gold’ and that life is as hard, or even harder than it was at home. It should also be taken into account that ‘migration’ is a term that encompasses movements of people, including women and young people, from many different strata of society, and the needs of them all should be addressed.

Being an organization of graduate women we would first draw attention to those women, qualified, for example, as doctors, nurses or teachers, who wish to go to work in another country. We are, of course, aware of the initiatives undertaken by the World Health Organization, in this regard and we are likewise aware that the health services in one country rely on women trained in other countries, which then find their own health services depleted of doctors, nurses and other trained professionals. While the discourse has already begun, it must continue and address the needs of other ‘professional’ migrants, many of whom are women. Individuals have a right of movement from country to country, or within countries, and their other rights should not be adversely affected.

We are also very aware from the projects in which our member organizations are involved that the vast majority of women are disproportionately affected when they go from countries of origin to host countries and that they are often denied their human rights. Given that women and girls in many countries receive less education than their male siblings, those that accompany their husbands many find themselves isolated at home, as they do not speak the language and are unable to negotiate even simple transactions, such as registering for a doctor or communicating with their children’s school-teacher.

The very young populations in many countries mean that there are no employment opportunities for young people locally and that they must leave their homes to go to the big cities or other countries in order to be able to find employment. This is particularly difficult for young women and adolescent girls, who are vulnerable to human rights abuses, and their sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular, are abused and they are prey to violence and coercion.

The International Federation of University Women therefore calls upon Governments to implement the relevant paragraphs in the Agreed Conclusions of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on Violence Against Women, to

“... adopt and implement measures to ensure social and legal inclusion and protection of women migrants, including women migrant workers in origin, transit and destination countries, and promote and protect the full realization of their human rights, and their protection against violence and exploitation; implement gender sensitive policies and programmes for women migrant workers and provide safe and legal channels that recognize their skills and education, provide fair labour conditions, and as appropriate facilitate their productive employment and decent work as well as integration into the labour force, and also take measures to ensure the protection of self-employed workers in cross-border work and women seasonal workers from violence and discrimination.”

And also to take the opportunity to strengthen and reinforce paragraph 7.11 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to ensure that the sexual rights of women and young people, as well as their reproductive rights are respected, protected and fulfilled and that they can all access the services that they need, particularly if they are victims of sexual violence.

In conclusion, the International Federation of University Women calls on members of the Commission on Population and Development to ensure that the Post-2015 Development Agenda does not just address migration as part of sustainable development but also includes the ‘human face’ of migration and human mobility. This has been highlighted in the recent discussions as part of the Thematic Consultation on Population Dynamics and is included in its report.

Thank you Mr Chairman