

Statement to the Plenary
United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
March 2010

Jan Eastman, representing EI, PSI, ITUC

Chairperson, Delegates, Colleagues:

I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of Public Services International (PSI), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Education International, speaking for more than 200 million members from across the globe.

This 54th Session is a critical gathering of the Commission on the Status of Women – marking Beijing +15. It is a time and a forum for us to reflect upon the 12 areas of the Platform, assess gains made, but more importantly, assess what should be done by Governments in partnership with unions and civil society to advance women and girls, and achieve real equality between women and men.

The trade union movement and civil society have been central to the advancement of women's rights.

Today, I express our dismay and disillusionment with the process. At this landmark Session it should be a priority to seek the input of trade unions and civil society. Instead, we have experienced insurmountable problems to access and engagement.

And we have been silenced.

The Outcome Document of this Commission, a political declaration, was a foregone conclusion – negotiated and agreed to before the meetings of the CSW even began. It does not move us forward in either content or process.

And despite the emphasis that Secretary-General BanKi-moon persistently puts on the importance of the work of civil society in advancing women's rights, it has not been easy to engage, or to negotiate.

At this time of multiple global crises, it is essential that all voices are included in decision-making, and that Member States have the opportunity and do consider the very legitimate issues brought forward by civil society.

We know the reality of our members and we know the struggles of women, in the workplace, in the home, and in society: To gain access to decent work and quality public services, especially in health and education; to enjoy clean water and reliable energy; to participate in decision-making; be leaders, and represented in *all* occupations.

Too many working women are to be found in precarious employment, with low pay, and limited access to social protection. Unpaid care work is a major contributing factor to gender inequality and women's poverty. Pay inequity remains a persistent problem – even in Nordic countries the pay gap remains at 12%, and in some countries it can be upwards of 50%.

[Recommendations:]

- We call on the United Nations and governments to invest in social infrastructure – in public health and social care – not only to mitigate the effects of the global economic crisis, but to place countries on a path to sustainable gender-sensitive development .
 - Of paramount importance in this regard must be the implementation of the ILO's Global Jobs Pact and the ILO Resolution on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work.
- We call on the United Nations and governments to invest in public education, to make it both a cornerstone of economic recovery and a means of advancing women and girls.
- We **welcome** the resolutions put forward by governments, especially that by Colombia on the economic empowerment of women. In that regard, we advocate strongly for:
 - Including gender perspectives in social and economic policies;

- Actively promoting women's economic empowerment through education and other means;
- Providing access to decent work, full employment and social security;
- Redressing workplace discrimination and inequalities;
- Implementing equal pay for work of equal value (pay equity)

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- We call on the United Nations and on governments to make social dialogue a reality, and we respectfully submit that what has been taking place at this year's CSW has NOT been a dialogue.

- As the United Nations moves ahead with Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR), civil society and trade unions must be a legitimate part of the decision-making process.

We unions unions offer and have the capacity to provide expertise in many of the 12 areas of B+15, particularly in women in the global economy, and education.

We stand here as members of civil society. Respect and equality for all people is too important not to engage. The United Nations must be OUR United Nations too.

