



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**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 Madre, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

### **Political declaration: Intercultural communications media, a strategy for the empowerment of indigenous and Afro-descendent women**

We, the indigenous women of Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the United States, recalling the Second Meeting of Indigenous and Afro-Descendent Women Communicators held in Oaxaca in October 2015, reaffirm the legal progress achieved at the international level in the area of human rights. In the first place, we note that the specialized human rights bodies of the United Nations have declared that access to technology and the communications media is essential for creating a truly democratic society.

We emphasize that the right of access to information is fundamental for the exercise of our rights and this, together with access to participation, justice and equality, has become a crosscutting indicator of progress on the part of States in giving effect to social, economic and cultural rights.

We insist that mastery of the media and the use of technology to communicate thoughts, knowledge and words are fundamental for equipping indigenous and Afro-descendent women with the autonomy needed to continue moving toward gender equality.

Although all human rights instruments have recognized the right to information, many of our countries still betray prejudices and stereotypes in the communications media that lead to racial and gender-based discrimination and to social and political inequality, and that undermine true sustainable development.

For these reasons, we call upon Member States to include the following priorities in the final document from the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women:

1. Indigenous and Afro-descendent women will be empowered only when they are able to live a life free from discrimination and built-in racism. To achieve this will require, among other things, the design of mass communications media, political parties and social programmes based on respect for cultural diversity and, at the same time, the strengthening of local community processes already initiated by indigenous and Afro-descendent women, together with their peoples.
2. States must take into account the varying contexts of indigenous and Afro-descendent women when establishing programmes of action and public policies to guarantee the right of access to information.
3. States must respect the right to freedom of expression for indigenous peoples, including direct participation in the communications media, full and effective access to information, the use and management of information and communication technologies, and the use of free software.
4. Steps must be taken to guarantee effective application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the declarations of the Beijing Platform for Action, specifically as they relate to promoting our rights in the area of communication and information.

5. The Commission should call upon States party to stop dismantling the community communications media and to cease violating the rights to freedom of expression for indigenous and Afro-descendent women.

6. Telecommunications legislation in the respective countries should be analyzed to create strategies and mechanisms for participation by indigenous and Afro-descendent women in the definition of communication policies and programmes with a gender-based and intercultural perspective. In this respect, we join in the hemisphere-wide efforts to reinforce and highlight the agenda of women communicators at the Third Continental Summit on Indigenous Communication, to be held in Bolivia.

7. Care must be taken not to criminalize participation by indigenous and Afro-descendent women communicators in defending their territory, the environment, and biodiversity. In this connection, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the indigenous defender Nestora Salgado García, from Olinalá in the state of Guerrero, who has been a political prisoner for more than two years. We demand her immediate release and we ask the appropriate international bodies to press the Government of Mexico to free her promptly.

8. Stronger, culturally relevant communication campaigns are needed on the comprehensive health and rights of indigenous and Afro-descendent women and girls.

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