



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

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 Equality Now, 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

Equality Now, an international human rights organization and a steering committee member of several coalitions, including the Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law, the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, and the Solidarity for African Women's Rights coalition, calls on all member states at the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women to ensure that all girls are allowed to grow up to become economically empowered women in the changing world of work, with all women and girls' rights promoted and protected by law.

The law affects virtually every part of a girl and woman's life – education, health, employment, security, citizenship, property inheritance and ownership, marriage and right to divorce – whether she is economically empowered or not. The World Bank in its report, *Women, Business and the Law 2021*, shows clearly that without good laws, regulating both the domestic and public spheres, women and girls cannot fully participate in society, including in the changing world of work. This hurts women and girls, their families and their communities, and hinders sustainable development. Equality Now's report, *Words & Deeds, Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing +25 Review Process*, gives specific examples of sex discriminatory laws affecting women's and girls' economic rights. Sex discriminatory labor, property, inheritance, retirement, and parental leave laws inhibit women's and girls' full social and economic participation and opportunities. This hurts them, reinforcing negative gender stereotypes, including in the care economy, inhibits everyone from living their lives freely on an equal basis, and makes women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation in-person or on-line.

We have seen broadly how technology has had an impact on types of work and ways of working, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The McKinsey Global Institute report, *The future of women at work: Transition in the age of automation*, estimates that between 40 million and 160 million women globally may need to transition between occupations by 2030, often into higher-skill roles. As the world of work becomes more digitized and automated, women will need to be skilled and technology savvy to seize the new opportunities. Addressing gender inequality in STEM, among other solutions, is required otherwise women will fall further behind in the world of work. Technology is also perpetuating sex inequality in the world of work through, for example, discriminatory recruitment algorithms. This is shown in *An Artificial Revolution – On Power, Politics and AI*. An equality by design global framework on digital rights is needed.

We note that a cross-country study drew the conclusion that “egalitarian reform of family law may be the most crucial precondition for empowering women economically” (Htun et al, *Gender Discriminatory Laws and Women's Economic Agency*). Universal legal equality – economic, family, personal and penal – gives women and girls greater opportunities for empowerment in the world of work and less dependence on patriarchal structures. Legal equality is an essential component to States meeting their obligations under international law, meeting the universally agreed upon Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 5 (achieve gender equality), 10 (reduce inequalities), and 16 (rule of law and access to justice), and meeting commitments made at the Generation Equality Forum, including in the area of Economic Justice and Rights.

International legal frameworks and commitments make a difference in the lives of women and girls only to the extent that they are actually implemented at the national level. We therefore call upon member states to re-energize their efforts and uphold their commitments, including by accelerating efforts to repeal or amend all

sex discriminatory laws as soon as possible without exception for religious or customary law; undertaking further legal reforms to give all women equal rights to economic resources; and adopting robust legal equality and non-discrimination frameworks, including in the digital, on-line realm, both at the national and international levels. These actions will accelerate women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

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