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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 Casa Generalizia della Societa’ del Sacro Cuore, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Presentation Association, Passionists International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Sisters of Charity Federation, and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Introduction

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd welcomes the priority theme of the sixty sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women focusing on ‘Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.’

Global Context

Responding to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published on August 8th, the Secretary General of the United Nations said it was a “code red for humanity ...that there is no time for delay and no room or excuses.” Climate change is an existential crisis that is threatening the planet. In addition to this existential crisis, COVID 19 has been a disaster unleashed on the world’s peoples with disproportionate impacts on the lives of girls, women and children. The global response to mitigation and vaccine distribution has been woefully lacking! The 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women has the potential to be a history maker, delivering fully financed and implementable commitments towards environmental justice and gender justice.

Linking Gender and Environmental Justice

Two global priorities, achieving gender equality and securing environmental sustainability are seldom addressed together. The sixty sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, provides an opportunity to address the interlinkages across contexts, countries and communities while fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The elimination of “all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,” is a key target of SDG 5 on gender equality. Discrimination and inequality embedded in patriarchal and negative cultural norms and economic inequalities serve to deny girls’ and women’s human rights.

Male domination seeks to control women’s agency and sexuality and is typically seen in incidents of domestic violence within the household, and perpetuated by laws and stereotypes that deny women’s rights to ownership, use, and benefits from natural resources, access to financial services and sexual and reproductive rights. This violence can also be seen in relation to natural resource depletion which coupled with environmental stressors and threats leave individuals, families and communities with reduced resilience and stifled livelihoods. Extractive industries, agribusiness and displacement of peoples and communities due to disasters, and the impacts of climate change increase girls and women’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Holistic Solutions

Given the current ecological situation with worsening conditions for girls, women and children and their communities, including rising rates of poverty, malnutrition, food insecurity and gender-based violence the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is developing an innovative approach to address multilayered inequalities and vulnerabilities under the ‘Good Shepherd Women’s Social Enterprising Programs.’ Designed with and for the communities where the Good Shepherd sisters and partners in mission live and work, they are meant to become long-lasting, solid enterprises that can consistently provide highly valued products and services for the population together with the capacity to

showcase and spread sustainable and climate resilient agronomic techniques while empowering girls, women and children.

These programmes empower girls, women and the local community by mitigating and reversing the consequences of mining, fossil-fuel dependence, climate change and gender-based violence. The adoption of resilient and sustainable agricultural models embedded in good agroecological practices in the supply chain, supporting small women farmers to manage natural resources, strengthening skills and offering development opportunities for the local economy. They also offer a solution to the migratory phenomena and an innovative model for replication on a wider scale.

The first programme is ‘Chakuishi’ (“Food for Life”) in Kolwezi in the Democratic Republic of Congo implemented by Bon Pasteur among artisanal mining communities. In this community, with over a century of mining, the tradition of farming and animal rearing has been lost. The crisis in mining, coupled with land grabbing, internal migrations, corruption and severe under-investments in farming and service sectors, create a situation where food supplies for the most marginalized people are difficult to find and expensive to buy creating food insecurity, malnutrition and disease. Girls and women who are illiterate are extremely vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

‘Chakuishi’ has created a social enterprising model that supports women led cooperatives engaged in farming and selling quality agricultural products. This creates stable and dignified sources of income, the possibility of education for children and improved diet for families. Chakuishi is considered a model farm in the region for its innovative infrastructures and production systems. In addition, the ‘Chakuishi’ fish farming adopts globally recognized best practices in terms of water quality control, fish feeding, growth monitoring and disease fighting. The curriculum for Chakuishi’s beneficiaries includes not only a full cycle of training for skills development but also empowerment components addressing the pandemic of gender-based violence, literacy, climate justice and human rights.

The ‘Kyma Kyetu’ (“Our Product”) programme based in three sites in Angola is an innovative social business model for the redevelopment and reorganization of urban and rural agricultural production. The Good Shepherd work in Angola integrates with the 2018–2022 National Development Plan to diversify from an oil-based economy to an agriculture-based one through capacity and organizational development of family farmers in rural areas. This is done by providing skills, farming tools, and access to markets, benefiting indirectly entire rural villages and communities. The programme links local family farmers in the countryside with urban women cooperatives and street vendors via a logistic hub that collects products from the affiliated family farmers to distribute in local markets and then to the urban markets. Utilizing holistic and technical approaches, the programme enhances women’s empowerment, provides food security and a resilience strategy to low-income Angolans facing a protracted crisis brought on by climate change and the COVID 19 Pandemic. Application has been made for a new certified course in Agriculture to enhance the knowledge gained.

Conclusion

“Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation”. (Laudato Si). Throughout the Good Shepherd world local activities address issues of the rights of girls, women and planet. Sisters and partners in mission in Sri Lanka engage in home gardening, using organic fertilizers and local aloe vera cultivation. They organize motivational, training and awareness programmes to inspire girls, women and communities to use environmental

and health friendly products. In India, promotion of sustainability within the family and local community includes shared household responsibilities, equal partnership in family businesses and joint decision making on finances and other issues. Women are encouraged to engage in political processes at the local level and take up public position and run for president or ward member in the village panchayat. Other countries adopt the 5 R approach of Zero Waste through conscious efforts to Reduce excessive use of plastics, Recycle waste material, Refuse to use goods containing chemicals – including fertilizers, and fast foods (Myanmar), Repurpose materials for the creation of cards and gift items and Rot, separating plant waste to use as compost (Colombia.)

Recommendations

We call on the Members of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

- Agree on a strong progressive outcome document from CSW 66 reinforcing, financing and fully implementing previous agreements towards gender equality and environmental justice particularly the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action and the Paris Agreement for Climate Change in accordance with the goals and strategies of the six Generation Equality Action Coalition Plans and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Ensure a balance between sustainable economic growth, social inclusion and environmental justice in policies and programmes at all levels.
- Support and engage with the newly created mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change through actively upholding and supporting the vision and values of indigenous peoples, human rights defenders and climate activists.
- Call on governments to ensure implementation, monitoring and compliance of all businesses – local and transnational with the Guiding Principle on Business and Human Rights.
- Recognize, implement and accelerate action in compliance with articles in related conventions -including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms Discrimination Against Women, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Biodiversity Convention.