



# 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 **Womankind Worldwide**, 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

### Introduction

Womankind Worldwide is an International Women's Rights Organisation working to strengthen and support women's rights organisations and movements in the Global South. Led by our partners, we build successful projects together, amplify women's voices and share what's working. We take collective actions with women's movements to advocate for changes to negative social norms and attitudes towards women's rights, laws and policies across the world that ensure women's rights. Together we're pushing for a world where women and girls don't just survive but thrive.

Our submission will focus on the review theme of women's economic rights. Our recommendations are aimed at decision-makers and made in the hope that the UN can use its position to both make and influence change on these issues.

These recommendations are made in the context of COVID-19 and the disproportionate impact it's had on women and girls' rights. COVID has exacerbated existing inequalities and threatens to reverse progress towards gender equality. This has also been the case for women's economic rights. Women have experienced increased care responsibilities and their higher rates of working in health and public-facing sectors increase their risk of infection. In addition, the flexible work they must often take has been hit harder by the pandemic, and many have lost or experienced a dramatic reduction in their incomes.

We believe it's vital to focus on the following areas:

### **Recognising, rewarding and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work by supporting States to provide services and infrastructure.**

The economy relies on women's unpaid care and domestic work for the profit of others. Women perform three times the amount of unpaid care and domestic work that men do globally and unpaid care would equal approx. \$10TN p/y or 13 per cent of the global GDP (Oxfam. 2020. Time to Care).

As outlined in Public Service International's (PSI) Care Manifesto, of which Womankind was a co-creator, we call for crafting a global movement to rebuild the social organisation of care, joining forces to:

- Recognise the social and economic value of care work and the human right to care.
- Reward care work with equal pay for work of equal value, decent pensions, dignified working conditions and comprehensive social protection.
- Reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women.
- Redistribute care work within households, among all workers, eliminating the sexual division of labour and between households and State.
- Reclaim the public nature of care services and restore the duty and the primary responsibility of the State to provide public care services and develop care systems that transform gender relations and women's lives.

In addition:

- Add unpaid care and domestic work to GDP calculations. This is necessary to make sure work is counted and reflected.

- A minimum tax to GDP ratio of 35 per cent. I.e. States to collect tax revenue of at least 35 per cent of their GDP to pay for public services and social protections. This is the minimum needed for gender-responsive budgeting.
- Support gender transformative publicly owned public services that are universal/affordable to provide what women need (health services, childcare etc.)

### **Make sure women have access to decent work and are treated fairly in the workplace**

Women are often forced to take insecure work that is flexible enough to fit around their care needs. This work often lacks protections, leaving women vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

In Africa, 79 per cent of women's employment is in the informal sector, compared with 68 per cent of men's (ILO. 2018. Women and Men in the Informal Economy). At a recent Generation Equality parallel event, a member of our partner organisation, the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations, spoke about the lack of safe working environments, basic services and social protections for women informal workers, many of whom do not have safe ways to get to their employment or shelter or toilet facilities when they get there.

We call for the following actions:

- Address gender-based violence and harassment at work through States' ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organization's Convention 190 (relating to gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace) and Convention 189 (on domestic workers' rights).
- Support the complementary conventions relating to maternity protections, fair pay, the right to assemble and protection of domestic workers.

### **Support fair tax systems and stop abuse**

5.5 per cent of Africa's GDP is lost through Illicit Financial Flows-more than the continent receives in Direct Foreign Investment and Overseas Development Aid combined (FEMNET (2017): What are the Gender Dimensions of IFFs?).

We ask that the UN:

- Tackle Illicit Financial Flows and support the implementation of progressive tax systems by setting up a representative, intergovernmental tax body under the auspices of the UN.
- Support a reform of IMF and World Bank loan conditionalities to eliminate encouragement of reliance on private investment and running of services to allow States to create progressive taxation systems to fund services and social protection.
- Encourage debt forgiveness and flexibility in loan repayments to stop the situation where States must pay a large amount of their revenues to debt servicing, to the exclusion of public services and social protection.
- Recommend a Minimum Corporate Income Tax of at least 25 per cent

### **Hold companies accountable for human rights abuses**

Corporations exert undue influence on decision-makers and their actions frequently undermine women's rights. Where corporations aren't regulated, this hurts States' ability to regulate and make policies and abuses occur unchecked.

Women are disproportionately affected e.g. by land grabbing and face greater obstacles in seeking redress. There is currently no legal framework ratifying corporate behaviour.

We ask that the UN:

- Support finalising and ratification of UN Binding Treaty regulating corporate behaviour
- Support efforts to reverse the expansion of corporate capture, power and impunity enabled by tax incentives and evasion

We are also part of the Feminists for a Binding Treaty Group, which calls for:

- Mandatory gender impact assessments on human rights
- Gender-sensitive justice and remedy mechanisms
- Ensuring respect, protection and enabling environments for women human rights defenders.

### **Make sure women have access to and control over land**

Corporations are digging for oil, planting large-scale crops and setting up factories on land owned/used by local people. Women do the majority of farming, but their voices are not heard. In Uganda, customary tenures are common, meaning women's land rights are hard to prove and they often get no access to compensation.

Land grabs also cause harm to the environment, polluting water with pesticides and destroying soil. Local people lose livelihoods as equipment and possessions are lost in forced evictions.

At Womankind, we're working with Ugandan partner organisations, the National Association of Professional Environmentalists and the National Association for Women in Development on the POWER project (Participation and Opportunities for Women's Economic Rights), which gives women skills to take part in decision-making and learn alternative livelihoods.

We call on the UN to:

- Support the halting and reversal of land grabs by advocating for free, prior, informed and continuous consent of all communities affected by land-based investment.
- Support the elimination of public policies that fuel land grabs through urgent, gender-responsive action to redress the climate crisis and prioritise sustainable land use and the needs of women and other small-scale food producers.
- Support the implementation of a shift from an extractive to a regenerative economy, ending reliance on fossil fuels and ensuring these transitions are just for women and girls – particularly those who are marginalised and/or face multiple and intersecting inequalities.
- Support women to participate in decisions on land, resources and economic policies
- Support efforts to make corporations fulfil their obligations to the human rights of women and local communities
- Support fair, transparent and equal compensation for land that is paid directly to women.
- Support efforts to provide economic support to women survivors of domestic violence and the means/skills to earn an independent income.

**Promote vaccine justice**

In line with other organisations, such as AWID (Vaccine Justice: How can feminists collectively organise to hold States accountable? 2021.), we call for the fair distribution of vaccines across the globe. Many States lack access to production and an adequate supply of vaccines, meaning there are delays in vaccinating their populations.

We support the work of CARE International (Let's Make Vaccine Delivery Fast and Fair) to make sure that women in health and care professions as well as those from marginalised groups who may otherwise experience delays and difficulties in getting a vaccine are supported to be vaccinated. In addition, recovery plans should target women-led businesses and Women's Rights Organisations whose incomes have been impacted by COVID-19.

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