



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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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 National YWCA of Korea, 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

National YWCA of Korea, founded in 1922, has advocated various movements to promote women's human rights in Korean society for the past 100 years. National YWCA of Korea, which went through the Japanese Occupation of Korea and the Korean War, secured stability in women's lives through the post-war recovery movement, supported women to become independent members of society through literacy education and vocational training, and established gender-equal family relationships by abolishing early marriage and concubinage systems. And now, the National YWCA of Korea keeps advocating gender equality campaigns and movements to abolish all forms of gender-based violence, empower marginalized women, and strengthen women's independent participation in society.

Over the previous 100 years, the subjects, targets, and perspectives of the National YWCA of Korea's movement have been 'women,' especially marginalized women from the center of society, decision-making body, and equal participation. Their organized and connected collective activities have brought significant changes in Korean society and have achieved present gender equality in Korea. Gender equality that Korean society has reached is a history that these women have struggled to create and is the result of the 100-year women's movement with the National YWCA of Korea.

In Korean society, however, there are attempts to turn these women's efforts into nothing. Since the campaign for the 20th presidential election in Korea at the end of 2021, politicians have incited gender conflicts and used them in elections. One of the presidential candidates pledged to abolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to win the support of anti-feminist backlash groups and is now elected president of the Republic of Korea. Since his election, President Yoon Suk-Yeol has openly said that there is no more structural discrimination based on gender in Korea.

However, there is still deep-rooted structural discrimination based on gender in Korea. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study in 2022, Korea's gender wage gap is 31.1%, the largest gap among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, and Korea remains at the bottom in the 2022 Economist's glass-ceiling index. The composition of President Yoon Suk-Yeol's government also reveals structural gender-based discrimination, with about 92 percent of high-ranking public officials being men and the proportion of female ministers remaining at 16.7 percent. Despite these facts, President Yoon Suk-Yeol confirmed and unveiled a government reorganization plan on October 6, 2022, which includes the abolition of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The government's reorganization plan of President Yoon Suk-Yeol contains abolishing the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and establishing a lower-level headquarter for gender equality in the Ministry of Health and Welfare to transfer the functions of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

The National YWCA of Korea has continued calling on the government to strengthen the national machinery and mechanisms for gender equality to achieve a gender-equal working environment, build a safe society for all women, spread a gender-equal perspective, and protect the independence of women in Korea. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is not only owned by President Yoon Suk-Yeol's government but all women who have been fighting for women's human rights for a long time. The ministry is their achievement and is the ministry for those still experiencing gender-based discrimination and violence. At this time, when gender equality needs to be further developed, the national YWCA of Korea cannot just overlook the retreat of the national mechanisms for gender equality. For Korea to

move toward a more gender-equal society, collective help from the international community and organizations is needed.

Therefore, the National YWCA of Korea strongly recommends;

- Emphasize the importance of establishing a ministry dedicated to gender equality and establishing national mechanisms for gender equality and urge UN member states to implement them.
- Review the implementation status of Sustainable Development Goal 5 towards gender equality and inspect specific implementation plans to achieve common goals.
- Conduct detailed research of member states that do not implement or reverse the resolutions made by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic of the United Nations, and establish a system for the voices of civic groups with consultative status with Economic and Social Council to be reflected in the evaluation process through the United Nations.

By reaffirming the efforts of the United Nations for development, equality, and peace and the importance of Sustainable Development Goals, the National YWCA of Korea will continue its efforts to create a more gender-equal society in line with international standards beyond 100 years.

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