



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

11–22 March 2024

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 Akina Mama Wa Afrika and Voluntary Service Overseas, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

We the undersigned organisations present this statement addressing the priority theme of the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.” Women, girls and gender-diverse people in all their diversities should be able to realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights with full access to a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive information and health services. Women, girls and gender diverse folks are disproportionately affected by poverty and precarity thereby affecting their (sexual and reproductive) health outcomes and wellbeing. Overlapping vulnerabilities such as disability, age, ethnicity, location are further compounded by stigma to hinder access to accessible, affordable, acceptable and quality SRH services for women, girls and gender diverse people.

The well-coordinated, well-resourced and global anti-rights and anti-gender movement threaten the advances for gender equality and women rights that have been made over the years. Retrogressive laws, policies and actions reinforced by negative social and gender norms that give governments and non-state entities a say in the most intimate aspects of the lives, bodies and wellbeing of women, girls and gender diverse peoples in all their diversities are being passed around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the invisible hierarchies of our societies and shone a light on whose lives are considered valuable and who are deemed dispensable. Black, Indigenous and other person of color women, girls, gender diverse folk, people living with disabilities, neurodivergence and queer folk most often fit into the latter category. It is this same category of people including those on the move and in humanitarian situations who are pushed to the frontlines amidst the ongoing climate crisis. The pandemic also confirmed what we already knew from evidence-based international guidance that public sector financing is crucial in reaching universal health coverage and achieving health equity and inclusivity. All these issues are interconnected in different ways but women, girls and gender diverse folk with compounded vulnerabilities always bear the brunt of it all. Most especially when the support they need is considered overwhelming for governments and there are increased calls for private sector investment which comes with the risk of commercialisation, privatisation, financialisation, fragmentation, cost escalation and widening inequality gaps in access to health and other basic social services.

In a world where we are lurching from one multiple and interlinked crisis to another, we make an urgent plea for bold and collective action. It is time we recognize the interconnectedness of our struggles and break out of our silos on a single issue. It is time for much-needed policy and societal changes and increased fiscal investments that first and foremost see women, girls and gender diverse folk as whole human beings with a right over their own bodies, decisions and wellbeing. Let’s reimagine a global financial architecture that recentres those most minoritized (including BIPOC women, girls, gender diverse, neurodiverse, queer, disabled folk) such that we reach the furthest behind and truly leave no one behind.

We therefore call on member states to:

- To focus on and increase public health financing and reduce reliance on external financing for critical health services such as sexual and reproductive health care services and information.
- Expand countries’ fiscal space for social spending by committing to systemic global level action against tax abuse, illicit financial flows, and unsolved debt crises.

- Commit to public health financing systems that are designed to leave no one behind, and a cautious stance towards leveraging private finance for health.
- To commit to a human rights, intersectional and gender transformative approaches and reject false solutions in addressing the current global crises.

This statement is made by Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA) and Volunteer Services Overseas Netherlands for the Make Way Consortium.

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