



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

### Sixty-eighth session

New York, 11–22 March 2024

Agenda item 3 (a) (i)

**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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives**

## **Interactive expert panel on 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**

### **Chair’s summary**

1. On 18 March 2024, the Commission on the Status of Women convened an interactive expert panel on the priority theme, “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”. Participants exchanged views and new insights on this topic. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, María Florencia González (Argentina), opened the interactive dialogue by highlighting that 10.3 per cent of women and girls were living in extreme poverty globally. She underscored the impact of intersecting crises on people and how gender-responsive economic and social policy could accelerate progress towards eradicating women’s and girls’ poverty.

2. The six members of the expert panel were: an emeritus professor at the University of Essex, Diane Elson; the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, Attiya Waris; a professor at the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, Ragui Assaad; a representative of the Continental Link of Indigenous Women of the Americas, Patricia Torres Sandoval; the Vice-Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Laura Nyirinkindi; and an associate professor at Jagiellonian University, Zofia Łapniewska. Representatives



from six Member States, the European Union and seven civil society organizations engaged in the discussion with the panel members.

### **Context**

3. The world is grappling with intersecting emergencies that have intensified poverty and inequality. People are not just “left behind” but “pushed behind” by systemic failures in the global economic and financial system. Women and girls are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty and, if current trends continue, over 340 million will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030.

4. Even after recent economic shocks, financial systems have not been reformed to effectively support developing countries in responding to and recovering from crises. Many countries continue to face unsustainable debt burdens that direct resources away from essential public services on which women and girls living in poverty depend. Illicit financial flows and tax evasion and avoidance further contract developing countries’ fiscal space for investments in strengthening social and economic resilience.

### **Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing**

5. Poverty and inequality are violations of women’s economic, social and cultural rights. International human rights frameworks include important obligations for States and other duty bearers to create inclusive, sustainable, rights-based economies. Such instruments also provide tools for measuring and understanding violations of the right of women and girls to live free from poverty.

6. Current finance-led development strategies prioritize profit and economic growth over social and environmental well-being and the realization of human rights for all. Strengthened regulation of capital markets and multinational corporations is one step towards ensuring that finance serves people. Fiscal policy can be used to address poverty and inequality. Expanding gender-responsive budgeting to encompass spending on public services, infrastructure and social protection and engaging parliamentarians and women’s organizations in the budget process are important entry points. New development strategies require democratic partnerships between States and citizens based on reciprocity and solidarity.

7. Reforming the international financial architecture is essential in order to expand fiscal space for countries to invest in gender equality and ending women’s and girls’ poverty. Currently, tax loopholes allow financial flows to bypass countries and facilitate tax evasion and avoidance. At the same time, many countries are prioritizing debt payment servicing at the expense of investing in essential public services, shrinking fiscal space even further. There is an urgent need for reform of the international financial architecture, and the General Assembly resolution on inclusive and effective international tax cooperation presents a unique opportunity for reform. It is also imperative to take concrete steps towards a sustainable, inclusive debt resolution mechanism.

8. In recent decades, indirect tax has increased while taxes on property and wealth remain low and corporate tax rates have declined in many countries. Indirect tax affects those living in poverty because they pay a higher proportion of their income on consumption. At the same time, the absence of a global agreement on a minimum corporate tax and limited taxes on financial transactions have increased incentives for tax havens, further limiting the fiscal space of countries for spending on social infrastructure. To mobilize domestic public resources equitably, there is an urgent

need for progressive tax systems and a global tax governing body for more equitable redistribution.

9. Despite significant progress in closing gender gaps in education, low female labour force participation rates persist in some regions. Women are excluded from the labour market due to social norms as well as the gender division of labour within the household. Occupational sex segregation leads to women's predominance in sectors of employment with lower earnings and precarious working conditions. Investments in social programmes can create decent work opportunities for women, while affordable, quality childcare and access to time-saving technologies can reduce women's care and domestic work and increase their participation in the labour market. For women living in poverty, targeted cash assistance and asset-based programmes have been effective strategies for graduating out of poverty.

10. Indigenous women face disproportionately higher rates of poverty but are pushing back against the concept of only being recipients of development. Through an intergenerational and intercultural approach, Indigenous women are raising their demands for fair, equitable treatment in the redistribution of economic resources. This requires their full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making; the collection and use of data that capture their lived realities; and the integration of their demands into policies, programmes and budgets.

### **The way forward**

11. Participants urgently called for a rights-based approach to addressing systemic crises and gender-responsive macroeconomic policy decisions that avoid austerity measures; resolution of the debt crisis, including through debt cancellation for countries in debt distress; a multidimensional index to capture unpaid care and domestic work, trade and informality; enhanced international tax cooperation, including through the establishment of a United Nations tax convention or multilateral tax body; harmonization and adoption of a global common corporate tax coupled with progressive taxation focused on increased wealth and inheritance tax and redistribution; gender-responsive laws and policies, including gender-equitable inheritance, marriage and divorce laws; revitalization of gender-responsive budgeting that encompasses all forms of spending and taxation; improved labour market policies, including those in which part-time and flexible work is encouraged; investments in gender-responsive social protection, social infrastructure and public services; well-targeted cash transfer and multifaceted asset-based programmes to reach women living in poverty; and the full and meaningful participation of women, including Indigenous women, in decision-making at all levels.