



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

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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 Anglican Consultative Council, Association of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa, New Zealand, Church Women United, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Lutheran World Federation, Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc., Salvation Army, The, United Church of Christ - Board for World Ministries, United Methodist Women, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, World Young Women’s Christian Association, and Women’s Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 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

Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, a coalition of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations representing over 550 million persons worldwide, welcomes the opportunity to address the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women's 68th session.

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", is timely in addressing current challenges facing women and girls. Recognizing the layered and inextricable connections between poverty and gender equality is paramount to achieving equality and empowerment for women and girls. Data demonstrates that poverty disproportionately affects women and girls. The 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit indicated reversals in progress to eradicate poverty. Additionally, in 2023 the Secretary General stated it will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws. Erosion of recent gains undermines rights, protections and progress for women and girls.

In such an environment, strengthening institutions and financing with gender perspective is a requisite for fighting poverty and correcting gender imbalances.

### Addressing Poverty

Systemic poverty persists through the economic exploitation enabled by laws, policies, and discriminatory practices that perpetuate it. It disproportionately affects women and girls in all societies.

Eradicating poverty requires addressing its root causes and consequences, some of which are gender-specific and relate to institutions and financing. These include but are not limited to:

- gender discrimination rooted in beliefs in gender inequality, patriarchy, politico-economic ideologies and other factors, resulting in failure to correct gender gaps;
- food insecurity and hunger, racism, lack of physical security and protections, allowing for the proliferation of gender-based violence in myriad forms (domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and violence, rape, female genital mutilation, child marriages and others) with impunity;
- lack of social protections such as insufficient and/or unequal access to basic, affordable health care (including maternal health, child health, sexual and reproductive health and mental health), affordable housing, childcare and eldercare;
- lack of quality education and economic opportunities, insufficient training to encompass digital technologies and methods of engagement, low wages and gender wage gaps;
- lack of political participation, unequal access to decision-making and representation in all institutions;
- difficulty in accessing capital and financing and underrepresentation in financial leadership;
- gender inequalities and economic injustices in the design and functioning of international financial systems, maintaining regional areas in poverty and worsening divides.

These issues further significantly impact women and girls when considering their diverse experiences shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, class, economic status, geographic location, religious beliefs, sexuality, and ability. It is crucial to adopt an intersectional approach, recognizing and addressing multiple forms of discrimination. Marginalized groups of women and girls are even more severely impacted.

All these factors increase women's and girls' risk of poverty and prevent their fully contributing to society.

Ecumenical Women organizations respond to root causes and consequences of poverty and gender inequality by addressing ways to strengthen people, institutions, and financing through a gender perspective. Member organizations provide holistic efforts to eradicate poverty through worship, learning, acting, and sharing to fill physical, spiritual and social needs. They provide food, access to basic services, and respond to educational needs for women and girls. Our organizations address health care gaps by providing, for example, resources and services for women experiencing unplanned pregnancies, families and individuals experiencing poverty, addictions, mental and emotional struggles. Our organizations respond to sexual and gender-based violence by supporting survivors and working to prevent violence through awareness campaigns, capacity and agency building, and advocacy. Our organizations provide and advocate for programs and policies that foster women's economic self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship. Member organizations act to tackle public finance and debt and regulate the financial sector and global economic governance. Many organizations prioritize racial justice ministries, including anti-racism work and dismantling structural racism, disproportionate incarceration, and decolonization of education. They advocate with local, national, regional governments, and international institutions. Various organizations acknowledge that communities often have the resources and leadership they need, and asset-based community development can be a strong link to poverty eradication.

To achieve gender equality and eradicate poverty through the strengthening of institutions and financing with a gender perspective, Ecumenical Women urges member states, United Nations agencies and civil society to:

- Strengthen institutions
- promote equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in all aspects of society, and support women's and girls' equal access to economic and political power and decision-making bodies, particularly for women experiencing multiple discriminations;
- incorporate gender responsive practices and knowledge in policy making to bridge the science, technology, and innovation divide;
- commit to accelerated action to remove all legal, social, economic barriers to achieve gender equality by 2030;
- promote affordable and quality education, training, and scholarships for women and girls;
- ensure safe, affordable, and equal access to quality health care that includes maternal and child health care and sexual and reproductive health services, and affirm the human rights of women to control their own bodies;
- eradicate unlawful and harmful practices that perpetuate violence against women, strengthen financial, legal, and judicial protections for victims of violence, and ensure discrimination and gender biases are eliminated in local and national laws, policies and customs;

- ensure social protections such as affordable childcare and insurance;
- ensure equitable access to affordable and safe housing;
- ensure reasonable working conditions with manageable work schedules, living wages with benefits including maternity, annual and sick leave, remuneration for unpaid work, child tax credits and insurance, and close gender wage gaps;
- engage with processes aiming to reform multilateral institutions (such as the Summit of the Future and United Nations 2.0) to ensure they contribute more effectively to gender justice and reduction of poverty;
- address the needs for just energy and climate justice at all levels of society;
- implement inclusive policies that cater to the unique challenges faced by different groups of women;
- ensure equitable and accessible economic services, resources and opportunities for economic empowerment;
- engage men and boys as allies and promote positive masculinity;
- engage with faith-based organizations in partnership for these institutional goals;
- Strengthen financing
- provide financial literacy training for women and girls;
- provide financial services such as savings accounts, credit unions and cooperatives, microlending and credit to small and medium businesses, people in poverty, women, and farmers on acceptable terms;
- provide programs that incentivize equal pay for equal work;
- revise tax and other fiscal policies to address poverty;
- increase government funding and assistance to close gender gaps;
- include gender equality as an objective in recruiting leadership of financial institutions;
- set fair rules and regulations capable of shaping and controlling global markets;
- reform the international financial architecture to be more equitable, reduce the numbers of countries in debt, and be gender responsive;
- fully implement United Nations agreements, including the Beijing Platform for Action, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goals 1, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 16, the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women, and United Nations' Special Procedures mandate on violence against women.

Through these efforts, it is possible to create a more inclusive and empowering environment for all women and girls, lift them out of poverty and ensure a more equal gender footing for all. Ecumenical Women will continue to partner with the United Nations, member states and civil society in these efforts.

Endorsed by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

Anglican Consultative Council,

Association of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa, New Zealand,

Church Women United,

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches,

Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America,

Lutheran World Federation,

Presbyterian Church (USA),

Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc.,

Salvation Army, The,

United Church of Christ - Board for World Ministries,

United Methodist Women,

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women,

World Young Women's Christian Association,

Women's Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,

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