

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S STATEMENT TO CSW 60, MARCH 2015

Ecumenical Women is a coalition of Christian non-governmental organizations. We envision a human community where the participation of everyone is valued, where no one is excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion or cultural practice, and where diversity is celebrated as God's gift to the world.

Ecumenical Women affirms that God's world was meant to be a world of abundance for all persons, with fundamental rights and dignity for all where the fundamental rights and dignity of all are honored. We welcome the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and urge the full financing of its implementation. We remind the Commission of the important role that faith-based organizations have in the advancement of women and will continue to work towards a just and sustainable future for all.

Violence Against Women and Girls:

The state has the responsibility to prevent violence and discrimination and to promote and protect the economic and social human rights of women and their families. Ecumenical Women recognizes and affirms that gender based violence and violence against women and girls are gross violations of human rights. Gender discrimination, cultural, structural and economic factors are underlying root causes of violence that demean the dignity of women and girls. Lack of equality in education, unequal pay for equal work, sexual harassment, human trafficking, higher health care costs, lack of access to services and gender-biased inheritance laws are just a few examples of this inequality. We acknowledge that this inequality was also created by misinterpretations of religion and therefore reject the misuse of religion to perpetuate patriarchal ideologies, discrimination and violence.

Maintaining a system of male domination, linked to racism and class inequality, perpetuates discrimination and violence against women. The endemic culture of legal impunity for crimes is a barrier to addressing violence against women and girls. Survivors of violence lack sufficient care and protection. Sexual violence in contexts of militarism and of conflict involving State or non-state actors persists and destroys communities. States hold responsibility to protect women and girls from violence, but are often perpetuating violence through militarism.

Gender equity awareness and engaging men and boys in this work are critical in changing societal and individual behaviors.

We recommend that governments, civil society and the private sector to:

- Implement fully the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international agreements such as CEDAW, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ensure discrimination and gender biases are eliminated in local and national laws, policies and customs;
- Eradicate unlawful and harmful practices that perpetuate violence against women, and implement Security Council resolution 1325 and related resolutions; engaging faith leaders in addressing cultural practices is fundamental to overcome prejudices and resistances;
- Ensure protection and psycho-social services for women and girls affected by violence
- Teach peace and non-violence with a gender justice emphasis at all levels.

Access to quality education, decent work and decision-making

Whether in the public or private sphere, from the highest levels of government decision-making to households, women continue to be denied equal opportunity with men to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Existing institutional structures and cultural barriers are inherently gender-biased and need to be critically examined and radically transformed. Institutional barriers – in government, corporate, social, academic, educational, civil, familial, and religious institutional structures – prohibit equality between women and men and deny women’s rights.

Discrimination against women and girls and their lack of decision-making power allows the inequality and inequity among different genders to continue. While resources have been put into primary education, women have limited access to secondary, technical and post-secondary education, diminishing the chance for full inclusion in economic, political and social decision-making.

We recommend governments, civil society and the private sector:

- Remove economic barriers to women’s educational opportunities;
- Promote an equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in all aspects of society, and equal access to economic and political power;
- Remove legal and other obstacles to women’s ownership of land and inheritance, gender discrimination in lending practices, and women’s access to social security and pensions;
- Invest in domestic agriculture, where women predominate;
- Ensure spaces for women’s active and meaningful participation in macroeconomic policy and decision-making.

Health

The faith community provides a broad spectrum of health services including maternal and child health services which have contributed to the achievements in

global sustainable development. Advancements have been seen on health issues, but women's and girls' access to adequate health services, especially sexual and reproductive health services, remains unmet and vitally important. From our Christian perspective, the right to access safe health services is an expression of every woman and girl's inherent dignity.

Lack of basic medical care and nutritional supplements, high rates of maternal and infant mortality, and the continued spread of diseases means that many women and girls needlessly suffer or die; countless other women and girls serve as caregivers for their families and community.

Caregiving work is most often unpaid and under-valued. Improving access to medical services and ensuring caregivers are financially supported would lighten the heavy burden women and girls take on and allow them to contribute more broadly to their community.

We recommend governments, civil society and the private sector:

- Affirm the human rights of women including their right to access to comprehensive sexual reproductive health education and services, free from discrimination and violence.
- Promote equal relationships between persons in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, consent, and shared responsibility for sexual behavior and its consequences.

Gender justice is an integral part of the work developed in faith-based networks. Ecumenical Women reminds the 60th Commission on the Status of Women that faithful women have played, and continue to play, a vital role in sustainable development and that engaging the faith-based community in women's empowerment and global development is necessary and key to success.