



CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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PURVIEW OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in June 1946 to promote implementation of the principle that men and women shall have equal rights. The Commission has 45 members elected by the Economic and Social Council to four-year terms with broad regional representation.

It meets annually for a period of ten working days to prepare recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. CSW also makes recommendations to the Economic and Social Council on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.

In 2016, AMUN will simulate the Commission on the Status of Women as a report-writing body, rather than a resolution-writing body. For more information about report-writing bodies, please see 16-17 in the AMUN Rules and Procedures handbook.

Website: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

THE EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN POVERTY AND HUNGER ERADICATION, DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

Despite overall improvement in gender equality around the world, rural women remain some of the most disadvantaged. On almost every major issue, rural women lag behind urban women and rural men, including food security, education and healthcare. Rural regions are home to 70 percent of the world's poorest people and women there play a crucial role in agriculture, the predominant source of income, yet they remain marginalized. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, women make up, on average, 43 percent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, but only comprise between 3 and 20 percent of agricultural landholders, depending on the country. The problem is

only exacerbated by limited government services in rural regions where citizens may be far from large cities and potentially far from aid.

The United Nations has recognized and discussed the role of rural women in advancing society since the mid-1970s. Beginning with the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, the United Nations put much of the responsibility on national governments to identify and implement programs aimed at reducing rural poverty. Additionally, Member States called upon international agencies to comprehensively review their criteria when evaluating rural development. Four years later the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was opened for signatures; Article 14 outlines the role States Parties have in improving the lives of rural women across all sectors, including health, education and finance.

In 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action once again focused on the need to provide household food security by increasing income for rural women producers. As part of the continuous follow up process, the twenty-third General Assembly special session in 2000 highlighted that, in order to increase food security in rural areas, women need increased access to land, capital, credit, relevant technology, and gainful employment, in addition to income. Later resolutions reinforced the need to address the issues that affect these women the most in order to improve these regions. In a bid to reduce poverty in rural areas, the General Assembly, in Resolution 64/140, encouraged Member States to expand employment opportunities for rural women outside of the agricultural sector, as well as increase their access to money-saving means, such as banking and credit services, in order to enhance their economic capabilities.

These issues were also incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals One and Three (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women). The 2005 World Summit Outcome document reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to eradicate poverty and once again called upon national governments to implement their own development policies within the existing framework of the Millennium Development Goals. In the 25-year period between 1990 and 2015, the United Nations saw



a significant improvement in the number of female workers in the non-agricultural sector, rising from 35 percent to 41 percent in this 25-year period.

While the Commission on the Status of Women had dealt with the issue of rural development in the past, the links to the empowerment of women and their role in poverty eradication were not fully discussed until 2002. The final report of the 2002 session outlines a comprehensive approach, calling on all parties to help alleviate poverty and empower women through updated economic policies access to health and social services, education and partnership between governmental and non-governmental agencies alike.

Empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty eradication was the priority theme for the 2012 Commission on the Status of Women. During the meeting, Member States agreed that there was further need to examine youth engagement and further financing for rural women. Despite the frameworks and attention given to the needs of rural women both at this meeting and the ten years previous, there is widespread agreement that major work must be done to fully address these issues. The Commission called for a stronger framework to be implemented to address the needs of rural women specifically.

Financing rural development has been a key consideration of the United Nations since these issues arose. In the past, the United Nations has looked to partnerships between government agencies as well as between the public and private sectors. The Economic and Social Council has partnered with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW); a non-governmental organization that funds small-scale development projects at the request of women it partners with in over 70 countries. In a statement submitted to the Commission in November 2015, the ACWW outlined a number of obstacles to empowerment and suggested a course of action for Member States to follow with a focus on empowering rural women via improved legal and policy frameworks as well as data collection. Although rural women make up one-quarter of the world's population, a severe lack of data limits potential analysis on their advancement.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 once again brought the role of rural women in society to the forefront at the United Nations. The first five Goals are highly applicable to the situation of rural women. Equal access to economic resources is a top priority in Goals one and five, while Goal two specifically mentions the role of women as the United Nations looks to double the productivity of small-scale farms.

Moving forward, the Commission on the Status of Women will need to examine how best to address the empowerment of rural women in the context of the new Sustainable Development Goals. With the still-recent adoption of the Goals, the Commission will need to determine how it can help Member States best manage their resources through this process. Ensuring that States have the capacity to implement programs in rural areas remains a key concern. Finally, the issues of empowerment of rural women and hunger and poverty eradication are again parts of the priority theme for the Commission's annual meeting. The focus will continue to remain on how Member States can best enforce and implement national-level policies as well as measures that may be taken to finance rural development.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can the international community support Member States working to improve the lives of rural women?
- What steps can Member States take to ensure the advancement of existing frameworks, such as the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What are the barriers to achieving Sustainable Development Goals one, two and five for rural women? How might Member States address those barriers?

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MEN AND BOYS IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is a wide-reaching issue of global concern, touching on almost every sector of society and with widespread implications for political, economic and cultural life around the world. While the issue has been on the international agenda since before the creation of the United Nations, global progress toward gender equality remains uneven. One in three women experiences a form of gender-based abuse, with violence present in every society. For millions of women and girls, inequality in the workforce has led to restricted or non-existent economic and educational opportunities. Additionally, access to reproductive health care continues to be limited, with maternal mortality rates at unacceptable levels.

While the discussion often focuses on supporting women, global discussions on gender equality have recently turned to the role of men and boys. Men and boys can make contributions to gender equality as individuals, members of families, political and social leaders, and in other capacities. Men often serve as leaders of political institutions and businesses, and their advocacy for gender equality can play a significant role in society. In some cases, men and boys also experience discrimination as well.

Gender equality has been discussed at the United Nations since its inception. The Commission on the Status of Women was created in 1946. The 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women established an international agreement of the rights of women. In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the most comprehensive international legal agreement on gender equality. The Convention largely covers three areas of concern: the status of women before the law, civil rights, and the influence of culture and tradition in restricting women's rights.

The four world conferences on women also played a significant role in advancing gender equality as a global issue, beginning with the Mexico City Conference in 1975 and continuing at the 1980 Copenhagen Conference. The goals of the first Conference were to secure equal access for women to resources such as education, employment opportunities, political participation, health services, housing, nutrition and family planning. The Conference also called on Member States to formulate national strategies to help promote equal participation of women in society. The 1985 Conference in Nairobi, Kenya declared all issues to be women's issues and stated that women's participation in decision making in all areas of society was a necessity. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, targeted the structural nature of gender inequality. Since the Beijing Conference, the United Nations has conducted five-year reviews of global progress on gender equality.

The Commission on the Status of Women first discussed the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality in 2004. The Commission's agreed upon conclusions emphasized that men and women share joint responsibility for achieving gender equality and that society as a whole experiences the negative effects of inequality. The Commission outlined a number of areas where men can play a positive role. The Commission encouraged media leaders to represent women as equals, rather than sexualizing women or minimizing the contributions women make to society. The document urged male political leaders to be strong advocates for political and social equality. The Commission urged Member States to encourage men to share responsibility in areas typically associated with women, such as caring for children, the sick and the elderly. It also emphasized that men need to be included in education about sexual health and discussions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Finally, Member States acknowledged that domestic violence was not a crime solely committed against women and that both men and women can play a role in addressing violence together.

At its most recent discussion of the topic in 2012, the Commission expanded the scope of involvement, noting the influence of young people, as well as the powerful role young men play in advancing gender equality. With the world's youth comprising forty-four percent of the global population, it is important to invite youth to participate in the creation of international development goals that work to achieve the overall progress of gender equality.

Progress toward gender equality remains unequal. While the international community has agreed-upon principles for gender equality, many Member States wrestle with the legal, political and cultural barriers to achieving gender equality at the national level. In order to pursue change, Member States will need to draft legislation and policies at the national level that target the elimination of social, cultural, political and economic structures that perpetuate inequality. These efforts require the help of men and boys as well as mobilizing support through the larger population. Addressing traditional gender roles and taboos is particularly important, as there are deeply ingrained social and structural constructs that are difficult to address with those unwilling to participate in a dialog about the advancement of women. Areas that merit future exploration include how to support greater sharing of responsibilities in home and work settings and how to support equal workforce participation of men and women. In many cases, fatherhood training has been successful at reaching younger men and has developed a higher perceived level of paternal competence and an increase in the time men spend with their children. Moving forward, Member States might also consider creating safe spaces where men can discuss their experiences and feelings on aspects of their life that relate to women in a positive manner.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can Member States balance cultural traditions and gender equality at a social and political level? What programs for men and boys are effective in addressing these issues?
- What international support might benefit Member States' efforts to ensure that men and boys are contributing to gender equality?
- How might Member States cooperate to share effective policies and practices in this area?



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