

Statement of the International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific: CSW 61st Session

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work is a critical and complex agenda. Economic empowerment, including the right to resources, the right to work, the right to an adequate income is a crosscutting right that impinges on many other rights and vice versa.

To succeed we must make an honest appraisal of the situation of women, the barriers to women's economic empowerment and the obligations of the state to create the conditions that will enable the empowerment of women. This appraisal is already done for us through the work of the treaty bodies and in particular where women are concerned, through CEDAW's periodic review of States parties reports. For example, an examination of recent CEDAW reviews reveals gaps in State action and even violations of women's rights that impact negatively on women's empowerment and the right to decent work. This is true of both developed and developing countries.

Whether developed or developing one sees continued horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, with women being concentrated in part time work or concentration of women in the lower-paid service sectors and in temporary work due to their traditional role as caregivers for children, predominantly due to child care responsibilities, which adversely affects women's career development and pension benefits. There is also the persistence of gender wage gap partly due to the fact that a relatively high number of women work part-time or due to horizontal job segregation. In developed countries, women take more hours of parental leave per week than men notwithstanding the policy prescription that has increased the entitlement to parental leave days for men.

Why is this so in spite of policies or legislation that encourages women's full participation in economic activities? The root cause is the persistence of deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which

overemphasize the traditional role of women as mothers and wives, thereby undermining women's social status, autonomy, educational opportunities and professional careers. So rights are inter-related. And holistic approaches are needed and the creation of a conducive social environment is essential.

Another phenomenon seen mostly in developed countries is the negative impact of the conduct of transnational companies, in particular textile and large scale agricultural corporations, registered or domiciled in one state and operating abroad. The inadequate legal framework to hold companies and corporations registered in the State accountable for violations of women's human rights abroad and the absence of an effective independent mechanism with powers to investigate complaints alleging violations by such corporations, deny justice to workers in the country where the transnational company operates.

We urge that the human rights regime, its established standards and norms and monitoring be at the heart of all efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment and the implementation of the SDGs. Synergy must be created between the treaty body processes and the SDGs.

Finally, in pushing the gender equality agenda there has to be substantive space for civil society including women's rights organizations as key actors. Thank You.

Endorsed by:

1. Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways, Turkey
2. Legal support for Children and Women (LSCW), Cambodia
3. United Sisterhood Alliance, Cambodia
4. Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED), Vietnam
5. Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
6. National Union of Domestic Employees, Trinidad and Tobago
7. International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), Australia
8. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
9. International Network of Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net)