

**JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 59TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

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ITEM 10 – ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

This is a joint statement of 15 NGOs: International Federation of University Women, World Union of Catholic Women Organizations, Socialist International Women, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, International Association for Counselling, Femmes Afrique Solidarite, Baccalaureat International, International Council of Jewish Women, Inter-African Committee, International Zionist Women, Zonta International, Bahai International Community, World Organization of Former Pupils of Catholic Education (OMAEC), Institute of Global Education, International Association for Religious Freedom.

Madame President

We call attention to the report of UNIFEM on “Progress of the World’s Women 2000, which assesses what has been achieved for women’s economic empowerment and gender equality. It highlights both progress and forms of gender inequality which still persist and shows through statistical indicators and personal testimonies that we have a long way to go before the Beijing Platform for Action is fulfilled. I would like to illustrate these assertions:

1. Eradication of Poverty:

One-third of the world’s households is headed by a woman. As a direct consequence of women’s disadvantaged situation with regard to education, employment, inheritance rights or land tenure and the various ways of discrimination and exclusion they experience in their daily lives, most of these households belong to the poorest segments of societies. Children from these households, because they receive little or no education, run the greatest risk of becoming child workers, a future generation that perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion. Neglect of girls’ and women’s access to lifelong education and training as well as to productive assets and credit, not only deprive women and their families of income but also reduce the skill level of a nation’s human resources, limit national production and bar countries from being competitive in the global market.

2. A Culture of Fully Democratic Societies

No society can call itself fully democratic if legislation and entrenched customs and habits prevent women from participating in the shaping of their society’s future; if children grow up in the understanding that giving privileges to some and limiting the rights of others is permissible. Democracy is a self-generating condition and its existence requires constant vigilance which has to permeate all political, social, cultural and economic spheres. As half of the population, women’s condition can therefore hinder or enhance the democratization process and could be regarded as an indicator of the level of democracy. Through the participation of grassroots and all other levels, women no longer call only for political parties to take up women’s issues; they are calling for a transformation of society in which the inclusion of women and their perspectives is indispensable. For example, it is a well-known fact women in Latin America have participated in massive numbers in the movement for democracy in that continent. In these struggles their participation are creating a social change particularly in the new awareness that women’s struggle for rights are simultaneous with the struggle for democracy.

3. Formulating Economic and Financial Policies which Promote Social Justice and Human Prosperity.

Access of women to decision-making at local, community, national and international levels determine also the development of social, cultural, economic and financial policies. Societies cultivate and inculcate sets of values in women and men differently. Limited access of women has generally assigned them to where they are absent from shaping important policies. Yet, if we at this Commission advocate for human beings to be at the center of development; if we want to share equally the benefits of globalization and if we demand that social justice be a reality, ***we have to***

