

**Statement to the UN Women Executive Board,
17-19 June 2014, New York, USA**

I am pleased to submit this statement on behalf of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva and our 32 ECOSOC accredited member associations and 12 observer organisations, all committed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment. This is the first time that we make a statement to the UN Women Board; therefore, we would like to begin by expressing our deep appreciation to each one of you, because your efforts enable us to have hope, to gain more strength and to bring our voices forward into this governance and policy space.

We express our appreciation and recognition of UN Women and its leadership, for ensuring that you have your feet on the ground -- that you are with us with us in our communities, in urban-slum communities; in conflict zones, such as Syria, Colombia, Central Africa Republic, South Sudan and Ukraine and in rural communities; as we protect the rights of our girls, either in India or Nigeria. You are also with us in the policy arenas with governments, the private sector and as we engage with the media.

We deeply appreciate that in the last six months we have had the visit of UN Women Executive Director, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as well as Deputy Executive Director, Ms Lakshmi Puri in Geneva. This conscious contact, connection and outreach has strengthened our voice and efforts within the various corridors of the UN, whether it's at the Human Rights Council; the periodic sessions of the various Human Rights treaty bodies; notably the Committee on the Elimination of Discriminations against Women; the World Health Assembly; the WSIS conference or the ILO annual conferences.

The presence of UN Women in our midst is essential. We request that UN Women consider establishing an office in Geneva and leverage the full potential of the UN system in advancing the rights, empowerment and security of women, as its work can be strengthened also through the work of CEDAW.

The Board is meeting at the same time as the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council, which reminds us of the inherent dignity of women and girls often eroded by poverty, violence, disempowerment and discrimination. Whether Member States, the United Nations entities, women's organisations or civil society, we are all equally dismayed by the extent of violence against women, the rampant impunity, lack of protection and support of survivors.

We request the Board to support UN Women and civil society groups working in the so-called "hard to reach communities" - those places where our girls and daughters are married off and are victims of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and forced sterilisation, while grandmothers go hungry as they seek medicine and treatment for the orphans. This is how we envision the role of UN Women ~ impactful programmes in communities working directly with women, supporting governments to deliver on their obligations to citizens, while facilitating and enabling intergovernmental policy framework for securing the rights and empowerment of women.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva, our members and partners are fully committed to mobilising globally for the Beijing Plus 20 review process. We are working collaboratively with our sister committees in Vienna and in New York, as well as women's networks in all other regions to ensure that the voices of women and girls are included in the review process.

We are pleased to share with you that we will be convening the NGO Forum for the Beijing Plus 20, UN Economic Commission for Europe regional review and our recommendations will be presented to the UNECE inter-governmental meeting scheduled for 6-7 November 2014. We recognise that the Beijing Plus 20 review process is severely under-resourced. It has not received the same political attention, funding or visibility as the process for the ICPD agenda. Nonetheless, we hope to contribute to building a momentum towards the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Unless there is a strong visible contribution from the women of the world, the issues of gender equality will remain on the margins, and women's rights an "unfinished business".

This is, therefore, the reason that we continue to engage strongly in the post-2015 development agenda. We believe that our voices at the UN 59th CSW session in 2015, will be crucial to ensuring that the gains made on gender equality are not lost, but that they find a proper place with adequate weight and clear commitments through quality targets and indicators in the post-2015 agenda.

We recommend that UN Women, through the Board and other mechanisms, propose that gender budgeting principles be included in the resourcing frameworks of the new development agenda. We know that that the implementation and accountability could both equally be measured by the level of resource commitments made.

In conclusion, we commend the work of UN Women and the strategic vision that Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has brought to the organisation following the equally sterling efforts of her predecessor, Ms Michelle Bachelet. We therefore request Member States to accompany this visionary leadership of UN Women with adequate financial, political, diplomatic and other resources. We believe that our own work as women's organisations is enabled if UN Women has good standing and is well resourced.

We hope that as UN Women Board, you will consider rotating the meeting of the Board so that the women of the world in other UN Headquarters, such as Nairobi, Vienna and Geneva can have an opportunity to also interact with you. We wish you the very best in your deliberations.

We thank you.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda
President
NGO Committee on the Status of Women-Geneva
General Secretary World, YWCA

Signed by members:

Make Mothers Matter, formerly Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM)

Inter-African Committee (IAC)

Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO)

International Council of Women (ICW)

Zonta International

OCAPROCE

Mothers Legacy Project

International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International)

International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)

Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN)

IUS Primi Viri (IPV)

Rwanda Women's Network

International Alliance of Women (IAW)

Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)

Solar Cookers International (SCI)

Medical Care Development International (MCDI)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and People (UFER)

Soroptimist International

World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS)

World YWCA

International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse