



**60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
14 – 24 March 2016**

National Women's Alliances Submission – Australia's Priorities

1. Working Methods – CSW and the SDGs

- 1.1. Gender equality and women's rights are essential to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We recommend that Australia advocate in all forums for a strong position on the role of gender equality and women's empowerment in the SDGs process, both in both goal five and throughout all of the SDGs, regardless of whether gender is mentioned in the goal, targets or indicators.
- 1.2. We view the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an opportunity to revitalise the conversation about the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and to support the implementation of the strategies in the BPFA. The BPFA remains the best standard for achieving gender equality for women – it contains the most detailed and specific plan of action on gender equality and the language in the BPFA is stronger than the language on gender in the ADGs. However, there is a level of political energy and focus attached to the SDGs on which we should capitalise at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). We recognise that there is an opportunity for CSW themes to be grounded in the BPFA and emerging issues, with clear linkages to relevant SDGs. Consequently, we support the evolution of CSW into a space for tracking and considering the SDGs.
- 1.3. However, it is essential that:
 - 1.3.1. we do not fall back on women's rights globally and we do not lose the detail and higher standards of the BPFA and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) when discussing gender equality. The BPFA and CEDAW must continue as core instruments for defining women's and girls' human rights and for achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, with the SDGs used as a new site for those core standards; and
 - 1.3.2. those facets of gender equality, women's and girls' human rights and women's and girls' empowerment which are not captured by the SDGs (such as the rights, needs and contribution of Indigenous women, women with disability, LGBTIQ women, young women and girls, older women, the Women Peace and Security Agenda, women in prison, migrant and refugee women and girls and sexual and reproductive rights must not be allowed to slip off the agenda through a focus on the SDGs.
- 1.4. Consequently, the Australian Government and the NGO sector need to form a clear and shared understanding of the relationship between the individual SDGs and targets and the other existing instruments, standards and plans relating to gender equality. In particular, we need to import the language of BPFA and CEDAW into the SDGs, regardless of whether gender is explicitly mentioned in a particular goal or target. This will require mapping the BPFA, CEDAW, the Women Peace and Security Agenda, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and subsequent

declarations, instruments and resolutions which advance the language of those core instruments against the SDGs.

- 1.5. The role of CSW in considering the SDGs should not be limited to goal five or to those areas with gendered targets or indicators. The CSW themes could be aligned to the thematic areas of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The HLPF must bear primary responsibility for monitoring and implementation of all SDGs at the global level, including goal five. CSW should not be the only place where the gender related SDGs and goal five in particular are monitored. We must resist the siloing of gender within the UN system. CSW's role must be complementary to a UN-wide approach to gender, with CSW allowing more in-depth discussions on an ongoing basis to supplement a cross-cutting approach to gender equality across the various international functional commissions. Gender equality and women's empowerment must remain integral to the achievement of all other priorities.
- 1.6. CSW should make recommendations or comments on the thematic area to the HLPF. This would have the effect of moving discussion of ostensibly non-gendered themes into a gendered space. However, the language used in the definition and discussion of those themes at CSW should reflect the language in the instruments described in 1.2 above.
- 1.7. CSW should continue to hold five year reviews of progress under BPFA.
- 1.8. Women's, community, human rights and feminist organizations and activists (collectively here called Civil Society Organisations, or CSOs) and academic institutions play a critical role in driving change and ensuring accountability for gender equality and the full realization of women's and girls' human rights. This role should be formally recognised and CSOs fully integrated into all aspects of the CSW. We acknowledge that Australia has advocated for the role of CSOs in the CSW in the past and we urge Australia to strongly continue to advocate for an active, meaningful and clearly defined role of CSOs at both CSW and the HLPF. In particular CSOs should be meaningfully involved in preparatory processes for the CSW, and expert panels and interactive dialogues during CSW and should be able to observe negotiations of Agreed Conclusions and resolutions.
- 1.9. Human rights instruments and mechanisms will provide an important framework for the implementation of the SDGs. Conversely, the implementation of the SDGs will contribute to the realization of human rights. Consequently, the international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, Special Procedures, the Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies and the International Labour Organization's supervisory bodies should be used to assess and guide SDG implementation. The SDG monitoring and review mechanisms must consider human rights and take into account the recommendations of international, regional and national human rights mechanisms. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) should be supported in working with SDG and CSW agendas and their role at CSW should be formalized.
- 1.10. Australia should advocate for the negotiations on Agreed Conclusions and other resolutions to take place during the Commission and not in advance to ensure that CSOs can meaningfully engage with the issues at the CSW.

2. Women's and Girls' empowerment and its link to sustainable development

- 2.1. There are significant synergies between gender equality and women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability. For instance,

women with greater voice, participation and decision making are more likely to allocate public resources towards investments in human development priorities, including education, health, nutrition and access to decent employment and equal pay.

- 2.2. The 2030 Agenda provides a key opportunity to make critical investments in sustainable development, gender equality, and women's empowerment in transparent, accountable, and measurable ways. The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized global partnership and transformative financing to ensure its implementation (that is, the full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda) which is also necessary for fulfilment of commitments and obligations to gender equality and women's empowerment and rights under CEDAW, BPFA, Rio+20, and other frameworks. States must meet their financing obligations, including through increasing the amount of overseas development assistance invested in gender equality and women's empowerment, both through stand-alone gender equality programming and funding and support for women's rights organisations.
- 2.3. The CSW60 priority theme of women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development and the review theme of the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls raise a number of key areas which have formed the basis for Australian advocacy in previous years, particularly:
 - 2.3.1. a holistic approach to the priority and review themes which encompasses the civil, political, economic, cultural and social dimensions of women's empowerment;
 - 2.3.2. the need to ensure availability of sufficient gender disaggregated and gender responsive and transformative data collection, particularly in the development of the indicators for the SDGs. We note that the new Individual Deprivation Measure has the potential to play a key role in generating sex-disaggregated (and age- and disability-disaggregated) data on key economic and social dimensions, especially in resource constrained states, and demonstrating over time the extent to which a focus on the SDGs is translating into improved circumstances for individual women in diverse contexts;
 - 2.3.3. the conscious inclusion of the needs and rights of indigenous women and girls in the SDGs, particularly relating to goals 14 (Life below water) and goal 15 (life on land) as they relate to indigenous land rights and traditional usage of resources;
 - 2.3.4. the conscious inclusion of the needs and rights of women and girls with disability in the SDGs;
 - 2.3.5. promoting gender responsive education as essential to women's and girls' economic growth and human development, including accessible lifelong and non-formal learning and education about sexual and reproductive rights;
 - 2.3.6. promoting accessible and comprehensive healthcare for women and girls across the lifespan, particularly the clear articulation and implementation of the sexual and reproductive rights of women in an environment of severe backlash against women's and girls' right to control their own bodies;
 - 2.3.7. stressing the importance to sustainable empowerment of addressing violence against women and girls in all its forms, including domestic and family violence

and sexual assault (including marital rape), elder abuse, harmful cultural practices (including female genital mutilation and early and enforced marriage), forced sterilization, trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices;

- 2.3.8. promoting women's participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in public life, commercial and economic activity, peace agreements and post-conflict recovery processes and within the community and household;
 - 2.3.9. addressing women's economic empowerment across the life cycle, particularly by recognising and valuing women's unpaid care work, promoting an equal division of unpaid work across the genders, addressing barriers to and security of women's workplace engagement (particularly accessible and affordable child care, paid maternity leave, gendered pay gaps, workplace discrimination taxation and other structural disincentives to work), addressing the gender gap in retirement incomes and savings and the barriers to economic participation caused by sexual harassment, impacts of domestic violence in the workplace and other forms of violence against women;
 - 2.3.10. ensuring women's access to and control over land and productive resources and access to finance and loans as critical elements in achieving women's agency and empowerment.
 - 2.3.11. ensuring women and girls have access to safe, accessible and affordable housing;
 - 2.3.12. ensuring women and girls have access to enabling technologies, including telecommunications and information technologies, while also addressing technology facilitated stalking and abuse of women and girls;
 - 2.3.13. ensuring women have access to specialist and culturally responsive women's services, including health, housing and legal services as well as access to community controlled organisations;
 - 2.3.14. Ensuring women have access to justice and full legal standing before the law and that the human rights of women and girls are protected within customary legal systems;
 - 2.3.15. recognising families in all their diverse forms and the promotion of rights relating to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (including the rights of lesbian, gay, intersex, transgender and bisexual people);
 - 2.3.16. resisting all attempts at redefinition of women's and girls' human rights that subsume these within the framework of the family and advocating for explicit language referring to women's and girls' human rights.
- 2.4. Australia has a strong history of articulating the need to address the intersections of disadvantage, those intersecting systems of oppression being: poverty, racism and xenophobia, heterosexism and homophobia, sexism and limitations on reproductive rights, as well as the historical impacts of colonialism for indigenous peoples. We strongly recommend that Australia continue to advocate for an analysis of the priority and review themes which addresses and explores intersectionality and promote the voices of women experiencing intersectional discrimination and disadvantage, particularly for:
- women with disability,

- indigenous women,
- women from marginalised socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups,
- young women and girls,
- older women,
- women in remote, rural or regional areas,
- displaced, migrant and refugee women,
- lesbian, gay, intersex, transgender and bisexual people and
- women in prison.

The National Women's Alliances thank the Australian Government for this opportunity to provide views and look forward to working with the Australian Delegation to continue its advocacy in these areas.