

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Statement for the 60th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women from Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand).

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand), in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2010, works for gender justice and equality for women and girls across all ethnicities. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand)'s Mission statement accords well with Goal Five of the Sustainable Development Goals: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The organisation is active in promoting empowerment of women and girls and plays a significant role in monitoring and reporting on actions and progress to eliminate all aspects of violence against women and girls. We have conducted five- yearly reviews on the status of women in New Zealand since 2005. This national research provides valuable longitudinal information on key concerns of all women: indigenous, Pasifika, disabled and refugee and migrant women, informing reports to the Commission on the Status of Women and to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Empowerment of younger women is a focus for Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) through mentoring and providing opportunities for engagement with wider women's groups.

Women in Aotearoa New Zealand celebrate their gaining of suffrage in 1893, a world 'first' for any country. Despite this achievement and some progress towards women's empowerment fundamental challenges *still* persist 122 years later.

The Sustainable Development Goals identify gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as major challenges. For implementation of these goals, targets and measurable outcomes must be established. Ongoing monitoring and reporting are necessary if gender equality and women's empowerment are to be achieved. To effectively implement the goal of women's empowerment the New Zealand Government must action all the observations and recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2012 and the outcomes of New Zealand's Second Universal Periodic Review, 2014.

In particular the development and implementation of a National Plan of Action for New Zealand Women and Girls to provide a framework with targets and timelines is urgently required. This matter has been raised in both United Nations mandated reviews by Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) and we continue to draw the New Zealand Government's attention to its lack of an Action Plan. For the most effective outcomes the National Plan of Action for New Zealand Women and Girls must be aligned with the *New Zealand National Plan of Action for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights*. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) will continue to

assiduously monitor, report fully and encourage government to support all aspects of women's empowerment.

Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) is mandated to support women in the Pacific region and ensure their voices are heard. For Pacific women climate change is a major concern. We have raised and will vigorously pursue regional climate change issues with the New Zealand government requesting consideration and support for our Pacific neighbours.

The very high levels of domestic violence across all sectors of society are of major concern. It is encouraging to see government looking at new ways to address all areas of domestic violence with cross party support within parliament. Goal Sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for significant reduction in all forms of violence. Goal Five specifies elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls including the elimination of trafficking and sexual exploitation as well as eliminating practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) has highlighted all these issues with government and in alternative non-government organisation reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Of particular concern to Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) is violence towards and discrimination against indigenous women, disabled women, women from ethnic minorities and gay, lesbian, intersex and transgender women. We enable these groups to be heard by government and at the international level at the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and at the Human Rights Council.

Goal Eleven promoting inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities requires cities to ensure accessible and safe transport and public spaces in particular for women, children, older persons and disabled people. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) has found these to be issues for women and in particular for disabled women. Our ongoing work with these groups provides the platform for their voices to be heard locally and nationally. On a local level we have petitioned and continue to lobby local government to follow San Francisco's lead and implement "Cities for CEDAW " in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland.

Pay equity and women's leadership opportunities are ongoing issues of national concern regularly discussed in the wider media. New Zealand has had equal pay legislation since 1972. However, there is still a significant gender pay gap of 11.8 percent with only 20.8 percent of board seats held by women. The Ministry for Women has been very active in promoting women into nontraditional roles particularly in the post-earthquake Christchurch rebuild. Despite some improvement women continue to be highly over-represented in low paid work, particularly caring industries and part-time work. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) conducted an appraisal of women's progress in 2014, its third five-year review, post the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Results showed that equity in pay, opportunity and equal pay with men continue to be prime issues of concern. There is widespread disquiet at the

Ministry for Women's lack of consistent, robust policy for bridging the persistent gender wage gaps. Firm and consistent strategies for women's economic empowerment must be put into place to address this. We call for increased resources for the Ministry for Women to ensure the full and effective development of a work programme to close the gender pay gap.

Education for understanding and action is a key element in moving forward. A core goal of Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) is to provide quality information and appropriate educational resources free of charge to the community. In 2013 in response to a lack of information regarding the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women an information leaflet promoting the Convention, designed to be understandable for people of all ages and ethnicities, was developed. These have been distributed to Parliamentarians, Government Ministries, the Judiciary, Police, community and civil society organisations, schools and public venues such as libraries. This handout has become a valuable tool for the empowerment of women and is a sought-after resource requiring a further print run. The leaflet has been made available free of charge to community and other organisations in the wider Pacific region and shared at previous Commission on the Status of Women meetings to support international understanding of the Convention.

All young women deserve respect and opportunities to participate in the development of policies and societal directions molding their futures. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) initiated discussions with adolescent girls and in particular with girls from Pasifika and ethnic minority groups including girls from refugee families. These discussions provide opportunities for the girls to have their voices heard and issues raised in a safe and supportive environment. The International Day of the Girl Child 2015 took the theme "The Power of the Adolescent Girl". Our meetings and discussions with girls aged between fifteen and eighteen years provide opportunities to encourage, support and applaud these young women while they provide leadership and role models to their peers. Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand) is committed to including young women in all of its activities.

The Commission on the Status of Women enables New Zealand's concerns to be taken to a higher level. The concerns for New Zealand women and girls, including women who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer are mirrored by many other states. Therefore we urge that the outcome statement from the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment must unconditionally support the world wide implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals targeting: the eradication of poverty; elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls; equity in education, employment and pay; decent housing for all women and girls; full health and welfare for elderly women, disabled women and ethnic minority women and girls. In the twenty-first century these demands are non-negotiable.