SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY STANDARDS

Internationally agreed standards and goals on gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls, and the realization of their human rights establish an ambitious, shared vision for a more just and equal world. They inspire people to rally together around a common purpose. Speak out, step forward, this is where we want to go! The time is now.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

They came from all around the world, a magnificent diversity of languages and dress, ideas and experiences. They were younger and older, from cities and small villages in rural areas. They spoke passionately on issues ranging from disability to LGBTI rights to the concerns of migrants and indigenous communities.

Yet their main message to the 2018 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women was powerfully united. We, as women, are on the move to triumph over discrimination and inequality. We know our rights, and we will not be left behind.

“The world has changed, we have new realities today” urged Indira Vargas, an advocate for youth and indigenous women from Ecuador. “We need policies of the state to reach our territories. We need health, equal education, and we need to generate more projects for economic development.”

Vargas was one of over 4,500 civil society advocates from 130 countries who attended the Commission. They represented over 600 organizations, from grass-roots groups to international coalitions. The Commission, the United Nations’ largest annual gathering on gender equality and women’s empowerment, was dedicated in 2018 to empowering rural women and girls.

UN Women played a central role in mobilizing activists to attend and, by working together, to add impetus to global movements for equality and justice. An event, “Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50-50 by 2030: Every rural woman and girl everywhere” provided critical space to demand accountability. A Youth Dialogue championed achieving the full rights and empowerment of all young rural women and girls.

The Commission saw UN Member States making a robust commitment to empowering and supporting rural women and girls, who constitute a large share of people still living in extreme poverty. In a consensus outcome, the Agreed Conclusions, governments committed to comprehensive measures to eliminate discriminatory laws, and strengthen economic and social policies so that all rural women have equal access to and control over land and productive resources, achieve food security and improved nutrition, can seize opportunities for decent work and financial services, and have essential services and infrastructure for ICT, energy, water and sanitation, including to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Governments also committed to ensuring rural women’s and girls’ leadership, agency, voice and participation. This strong outcome provides a roadmap for accelerated action by governments, civil society and women’s groups, including with UN Women’s support.

A HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Each year, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development convenes to review progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. UN Women advocates with governments to address gender equality issues in their national reviews. In 2017, the review covered the fifth goal, on gender equality and women’s empowerment. UN Women co-led analyses and expert inputs in the lead-up to the meeting, providing recommendations subsequently reflected in a Ministerial Declaration. Countries agreed on addressing structural barriers to equality, such as discriminatory laws; implementing all of the global goals to deliver results for women and girls; and integrating gender equality strategies across national development plans.

GENDER ACTION PLANS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change poses threats to all people and the planet, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls. They not only have less of a say in decision-making to respond to it, but many are also more vulnerable to its consequences,
Mapping and measuring the road to the Sustainable Development Goals

Efforts to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals are rapidly gearing up towards their 2030 deadline. To keep focused attention on gender equality and women’s empowerment, UN Women in 2018 issued the first global report mapping top priorities for action.

Looking across the 17 goals, Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offered detailed, compelling evidence on pervasive gender discrimination in a number of areas. It found, for example, that women tend to be poorer than men, with 104 women living on less than a meagre USD 1.90 per day, compared to 100 men. Further, more than 50 per cent of urban women and girls in developing countries lack at least one of the following: clean water, improved sanitation, durable housing and sufficient living space.

The report highlighted how different dimensions of well-being and deprivation are deeply intertwined, such as when a girl in poverty who is forced to marry young may then drop out of school and suffer complications from giving birth at an early age. Going beyond national averages, the report uncovered yawning gaps in countries between women and girls based on income, race/ethnicity or where they live.

SAFEGUARDING MIGRANT RIGHTS

Throughout 2017, UN Women provided expertise on gender equality issues in migration policies and programmes, and continued backing efforts to integrate women’s human rights across the proposed global compact on migration. As a member of the United Nations’ inter-agency Global Migration Group, UN Women continuously elevates attention to the gendered dimensions of migration across the UN system.

A breakthrough agreement by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, recognized the violence and discrimination faced by women migrant workers. The new Consensus, backed by UN Women, capped a decade of negotiations to better safeguard the rights of the region’s 10 million migrant workers. For the 10 member countries of the association, it enshrines commitments to addressing gender-based discrimination, and protecting women migrant workers from violence and sexual harassment. Renewed commitment to adopting the consensus stemmed in part from comprehensive analysis overseen by UN Women that assessed trends in women’s labour mobility and spotlighted their major economic contributions.

International Women’s Day 2018

The call resounded around the world on 8 March 2018, International Women’s Day. The theme of the day: THE TIME IS NOW: RURAL AND URBAN ACTIVISTS TRANSFORMING WOMEN’S LIVES. It echoed the new activism of women globally as well as discussions at the UN Commission on the Status of Women on rural women.

UN Women mobilized people through 45 countries and 150 events, ranging from marches to panel discussions, cultural events, seminars and contests. At UN Headquarters, a high-level celebration of the day included the UN Secretary-General; the UN Women Executive Director; Academy Award-winning actor and activist Reese Witherspoon; Tony-nominated playwright, actor and activist Danai Gurira; President of the National Farmworkers Women’s Alliance Mónica Ramírez; and civil society representatives and leaders.

Media coverage made a splash through 5,000 articles in 90 countries. Leading outlets—The Associated Press, CNN, Al Jazeera, CBS News, PBS, PRI, CNBC and more—put a spotlight on rural women as key to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Dynamic web content drew over 200,000 unique page views, comprising an interactive timeline on women’s rights, photo essays and infographics, cartoons, videos and a host of human interest stories celebrating activists. The hashtag #IWD2018 was used 1.8 million times by 900,000 people and organizations.