

STATEMENT ON FOCUS AREA 5: GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Thank you honorable co-chairs and distinguished delegates for this opportunity. I am Yvette Kathurima speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Groups, Major Group for Children and Youth as well as NGOs Major Group.

At OWG 8 - About 100 countries from all regions, speaking individually or in groups, supported a two-pronged approach to gender equality and women's empowerment in the SDGs. This support has been echoed in different regional meetings in Africa, the Arab Region and in Latin America and the Caribbean with calls for a specific goal on gender equality. We applaud the Co-chairs for taking note of this - with the inclusion of a focus area on gender equality and women's empowerment. We are equally pleased to see an integrated approach, with inter-linkages identified between the 19 focus areas

However, there are several areas where the document needs to be strengthened:

- 1) Unlike the Co-Chairs summary document of OWG 8: women's rights are not featured in the document which weakens the progressive language that called for Gender Equality, women's rights and women's empowerment;
- 2) The document does not also call for the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work, done mostly by women and migrant domestic workers;
- 3) The document does not guarantee the sexual and reproductive rights of women of all ages, especially adolescent girls, and it does not guarantee sexual, bodily and reproductive autonomy free from stigma, discrimination and violence;
- 4) The impact and burden of disasters on vulnerable groups and their productive assets has also not been addressed.

We therefore suggest to strengthen the document and add to the existing language, the mention of:

- Women's access to justice; including an end to all forms of sexual and gender- based violence and discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as an end to sexual violence perpetrated during and after conflict and natural disasters;
- The provision of comprehensive sexuality education programs that promote respect for human rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, non-violence and peace-building;

We reiterate references made to:

- Eliminate early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honor killings, child labour and the trafficking of children, especially girls;
- Guarantee the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls at all public and private spheres, including in decision making and leadership, and in all peace processes
- Women's equitable access to, control over and ownership of resources that promote fair asset redistribution among different social groups, including land, water, oceans, credit, information, technology, intellectual and cultural property
- Eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, – which the World Bank says exist in over 120 countries by law – and practices that contribute to gender inequalities, inhibit access to services and rights, and criminalize or

stigmatize children, adolescents, and young people; promote access to legal advocacy for the disenfranchised.

We recommend the recognition of the importance of the means of implementation and recall Ireland's intervention this morning regarding financing for gender equality. In the spirit of partnership, we commit to jointly develop these targets and subsequent indicators as well as to contribute technical expertise on gender mainstreaming in each of the aforementioned areas.

We additionally call for reference to be made to guiding frameworks that support women's rights and women's empowerment such as CEDAW, The Beijing Platform for Action, ICPD and the Rio +20 outcome document

Honorable co-chairs, distinguished delegates, in conclusion, we look forward to continued collaboration between women and men, governments and civil society so as to achieve the set commitments. The realization of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment will go a long way in ensuring a just, fair, equitable and sustainable world.

Thank you.