

STATEMENT OF FEMINIST AND WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS ON THE VERY ALARMING TRENDS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS OF OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THE 57TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

We, the undersigned organisations and individuals across the globe, are again alarmed and disappointed that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is wavering in its commitment to advance women's human rights as demonstrated in the constant negotiation of the language in the outcome document continues.

On the occasion of celebrating the International Women's Day we call on the states to reaffirm its commitment to agreed upon standards in promoting women's human rights as articulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action as well as other international humanitarian and human rights law.

We say NO to any re-opening of negotiations on the already established international agreements on women's human rights and call on all governments to demonstrate their commitments to promote, protect and fulfill human rights and fundamental freedoms of women.

It is alarming that states are continuing to negotiate established standards that they themselves have agreed to as we are witnessing in the last few days of negotiation. Considering the lack of an outcome document last year we hope that this is not the pattern when it comes to advancing women's human rights agenda. Women's human rights are not to be negotiated away.

Similar to last year, we strongly hold the position that given the progressive development in the international era on standard setting there should no longer be any contention on any issues related to the definition and intersectionality of women and girls experiencing violence against women, including in relations to sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, harmful practices perpetuated in the context of negative culture and traditions, among others. We remind states that the CSW is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women with the sole aim of promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. Its mandate is to ensure the full implementation of existing international agreements on women's human rights and gender equality.

We strongly demand all governments and the international community to reject any attempt to invoke traditional values or morals to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope. Customs, tradition or religious considerations must not be tolerated to justify discrimination and violence against women and girls whether committed by State authorities or by non-state actors. Given the current global activism around violence against women it is imperative that member states take the lead in agreeing on a progressive outcome document that reaffirms its commitments to universal human rights standards.

This is an important moment as we are planning the post 2015 process. The outcome document has to advance women's human rights and not lower the bar for women's human rights. Future international negotiations must move forward implementation of policies and programmes that secure the human rights of girls and women.

We call upon the member states of the UN and the various UN human rights and development entities to recognise and support the important role of women's groups and organisations working at the forefront of challenging traditional values and practices that are intolerant to fundamental human rights norms, standards and principles.

Drafted by:

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific)

Endorsed by:

Amnesty International

ANIS - Institute of Bioethics, Human Rights and Gender – Brazil

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

Asia Safe Abortion Partnership

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Namibia Women's Health Network

Rutgers WPF, Netherland

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)