

SANTO DOMINGO DECLARATION



6 and 7 of February 2018
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic



Photo: UN Women

We, the Ministers and Senior Officials of the National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, met in Santo Domingo on 6 and 7 of February 2018 for the Regional Consultation prior to the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), which will consider as its priority theme **"Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls"**, which will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 of March 2018.

We reaffirm the commitments made by our States in international and regional agreements, pacts, and conventions on women's human rights and gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), and all the instruments regarding physical autonomy, empowerment in decision-making, and the economic empowerment of rural women, adolescents and girls, in all their diversity –

including, among others, peasant, rural workers, indigenous, Afro-descendants, mestizas, migrant, displaced, refugee, continental and insular, with disabilities, and living with HIV/AIDS, – to live lives free of any form of violence and discrimination.

We recognize the cultural, social, economic, political, environmental contributions and traditional and ancestral knowledge of indigenous and Afro-descendant women in rural areas, as well as their collective and individual rights affirmed in international instruments, such as the ILO Convention 169, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, among others.

We reiterate our commitment to work for the full exercise of civil, political, environmental, economic, labour, social, cultural, sexual and reproductive rights for all women, according to their life cycle. To this end, it is necessary to remove structural obstacles which place rural women and girls at a disadvantage in the enjoyment of their human rights and the achievement of gender equality.

Recall that Article 14 of the CEDAW Convention expresses the obligation of the States to take measures to realize the substantive equality of rural women; however, their disadvantages persist, including obstacles to their organization and the exercise of their citizenship, given their difficulties to access high-quality education, health services, justice. In addition, they lack due protection to live a life free of violence, especially in cases of armed conflict. As a result, they face multiple intersecting inequalities and discriminations, aggravated by trends adverse to gender equality and women's rights, which are patriarchal and in many cases fundamentalist, that reinforce stereotypes, reject an understanding of gender as a social construct and aim to maintain a system of power based on the sexual division of labour.

We acknowledge that the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) emphasizes the special circumstances these States face with regard to sustainable development, due to their specific vulnerabilities, and warns of the need to increase rural employment and income, focusing on the empowerment of rural women.

We recognize the increased frequency and intensity of the negative impacts of natural phenomena resulting from climate change and the unique vulnerabilities of rural women in all their diversity, especially those living in SIDS, and the way in which this impacts their economic and social empowerment rights and safety.

We recognize the particular impact that violence and armed conflict have on the lives of rural women, the importance of ensuring them protection and security within their communities and the fundamental role they play in the prevention of conflict and construction of sustainable peace.

We believe that rural women in all their diversity make a vital contribution to productive development, wellbeing, food security, and social cohesion and they play a fundamental role as caregivers of their families, communities, of life itself and of nature, acknowledged in some cultures and nations as Mother Earth. We acknowledge that a

debt remains with them in terms of better access to their rights. They are major defenders of human and environmental rights, often putting their own lives at risk. This demonstrates that gender equality is a benefit for all humanity, an indispensable condition to achieve sustainable development.

We **emphasize** that the empowerment of rural women in all their diversity and the effective enjoyment of their human rights with gender equality, including respect for their self-determination and rejection of unilateral measures contrary to international law, is essential to achieve the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the Montevideo Consensus, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The implementation of these agreements must ensure that no rural women or girls are left behind.

We **recognize** the contributions of academic researchers, civil society organizations, and United Nations agencies, especially UN Women, FAO, WFP, and IFAD, whose work has enabled us to understand the problems, aspirations, and proposals of rural women of our region and think how we may contribute as leaders of our institutions.

We **express our recognition** to the CEDAW Committee for its General Recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, which guided our discussions, as well as our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his report on “Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls” and constructive reflections and recommendations to overcome the obstacles rural women and girls in all their diversity face to access their human rights.

As the heads of governing and managing bodies responsible for public policies to promote gender equality, we declare that our efforts will focus on:

1. GUARANTEEING RURAL WOMEN IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY ACCESS TO ALL CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS, thus we propose to:

- 1.1. Recognize and strengthen the organization, capacities and leadership of rural women in all their diversity, fostering parity, the democratization of political systems and the reform of electoral laws so that they guarantee their full and effective participation;
- 1.2. Promote the social and institutional recognition of rural women in all their diversity as full citizens, right holders and key economic actors in household and national economies, valuing their productive input and their contribution to social development, family wellbeing, territorial balance, food security, social cohesion and economic prosperity; and strengthen their community networks and different forms of association;

- 1.3. Promote effective public policies that ensure the full participation of rural women in all their diversity, who face multiple and inter-related forms of discrimination, integrating an intercultural, intergenerational and inter-linguistic focus and ensuring sufficient resource allocation for their implementation;
- 1.4. Guarantee the universal registration of births in rural areas to ensure legal identity to rural women and girls;
- 1.5. Guarantee high quality, intercultural, multilingual, and secular education throughout the lifespan of all girls and women in rural settings;
- 1.6. Affirm CEDAW General Recommendation 36 paragraph 69 (i) which states “to develop and introduce age-appropriate, evidence-based, scientifically accurate mandatory curricula at all levels of education covering comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, responsible sexual behavior, prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases”;
- 1.7. Design comprehensive strategies to eradicate pregnancies of rural girls and prevent early pregnancies in girls and adolescents and provide support services for adolescent mothers;
- 1.8. Prevent early unions and eliminate child marriage.
- 1.9. Allocate funding for high quality and accessible health services for rural women in all their diversity, with medical and health personnel trained in human rights and multiculturalism, with special emphasis on sexual and reproductive health, including the needs associated with menstrual hygiene, and prenatal, birth and post-natal care, respecting traditional knowledge and ancestral practices;
- 1.10. Prevent, sanction, eliminate and provide redress to all forms of violence and discrimination against rural women and girls in all their diversity, in public and private spheres, to ensure their full development and respect of their dignity, and penalize all acts of racism and discrimination against women in rural areas;
- 1.11. Promote the harmonization of legislation and ensure the implementation of international conventions and national laws which promote the eradication of all forms of violence against women;
- 1.12. Design, implement and strengthen efficient measures to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking and smuggling of rural women and girls in all their diversity, leveraging, among other mechanisms, bilateral and

multilateral cooperation, and develop specialized mechanisms to support, protect and provide redress for victims.

- 1.13. Ensure rural women, girls and adolescents in all their diversity, access to education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as technical instruction in ICTs and new technologies;
- 1.14. Strengthen statistical systems to compile, analyze, use and disseminate data on the situation of rural women and girls disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant characteristics, for the design of public policies and the protection of their human rights, as well as follow up to national and international commitments;
- 1.15. Ensure the participation and leadership of rural and indigenous women in all matters that affect them directly, and support their organization and voice, overcoming the current situation of underrepresentation or absence in important decision-making spaces;
- 1.16. Promote participation and leadership of rural women in conflict prevention, peace-building processes and post-conflict recovery initiatives and guarantee their integral reparation, as well as their protection and security within their communities;
- 1.17. Highlight the need to strengthen the machineries for the advancement of women with human and financial resources in order to address the multiple challenges faced by rural women and girls in all their diversity, and achieve substantive equality.

2. GUARANTEEING AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING FOR RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY BY ENHANCING INCOME SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION.

In our region, 40% of rural women over the age of 15 lack an income of their own, despite performing multiples tasks. When employed, their jobs usually require fewer qualifications and pay lower wages than those of men, with heavier workloads and less or no social protection. **We thus propose to:**

- 2.1. Strengthen comprehensive care policies investing in social infrastructure, technology and basic services (childcare, care of sick persons, of persons with disabilities and the elderly) in rural areas, and to foster social and gender co-responsibility and a change in discriminatory cultural patterns in care work in order to make it visible, recognize it and redistribute it between women and men, the community, the private sector and the State;

- 2.2. Remove structural, social, economic, cultural and geographic barriers, both de jure and de facto, so that rural women of working age in all their diversity access decent work and enjoy income security, with recognition of their labour and social security rights, whether in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishery, or non-agricultural activities in rural areas;
- 2.3. Promote educational programmes for rural girls and adolescent women in all their diversity, broadening coverage so that education begins at 4 years of age; and prevent and eradicate child labor;
- 2.4. Increase access for rural women in all their diversity to development and poverty eradication programmes and policies, access to credit and social protection to promote their economic empowerment, ensuring their participation from the design and planning phases;
- 2.5. Encourage social protection floors as a strategy to guarantee minimum access to services and income security for rural women in all their diversity;
- 2.6. Promote the ratification of and compliance with ILO Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration and Convention 189 on Domestic Workers, and its effective implementation in rural areas;
- 2.7. Strengthen institutional frameworks and gender public policies with an intercultural focus aimed at rural women in all their diversity, and the implementation of special temporary measures to close gender gaps and ensure substantive equality;
- 2.8. Guarantee rural women in all their diversity access to justice administration systems with an intercultural and gender focus, including grievance mechanisms and labor inspections, as well as free public legal assistance specifically designed for rural women, which are locally accessible and integrate indigenous languages and dialects.

3. GUARANTEEING THE EFFECTIVE PROVISION OF FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION

In 2016 the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean increased. This problem is aggravated by the lack of potable water, and the lack of access to sanitation in rural areas. This situation jeopardizes the pledge to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Gender equality is an essential condition to achieve food security and improved nutrition, as well as to guarantee the human right to adequate nutrition, not only for the rural population but for the entire population of our countries. **We thus propose to:**

- 3.1. Strengthen sustainable production, respecting environmental laws, and recognize and revive traditional and ancestral knowledge and practices for sustainable production and consumption, protecting the production and exchange of endemic seeds and promoting access to local, national and international markets for rural women in all their diversity;
- 3.2. Assess the environmental and gender impact of agricultural policies on the food security of rural women, girls and households, and protect family agriculture and other forms of production, as well as the consumption by rural communities and indigenous peoples of their own food;
- 3.3. Ensure gender responsive food assistance and risk management, response and mitigation programmes that advance gender equality and women's empowerment, taking into account the needs of rural women in all their diversity, in particular those of pregnant and lactating women;
- 3.4. Increase access to sustainable water sources, reserves and sanitation services for all communities, in particular those living in the most remote areas. Ensure care and protection of aquifers and river sources; and guarantee the right to universal access to safe and drinking water free of pollution;
- 3.5. Promote access to sustainable and affordable technology, as well as to renewable energies and innovation to reduce the burden of unpaid work for rural women in all their diversity;
- 3.6. Ensure rural women, in all their diversity, are included in all stages of planning and implementation of disaster prevention, reduction and mitigation, ranging from early warning to relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;
- 3.7. Promote capacity-building programmes and the use of clean technologies allowing rural women in all their diversity to adapt to climate change, taking into account the knowledge and practices of indigenous people and local communities and facilitating indigenous women's access to information in their own languages and in different formats;
- 3.8. Promote the provision of public food procurement programmes by rural women's businesses, organizations and cooperatives, and support their access to local, national, and international markets, as well as other exchange strategies within the framework of a social and inclusive economy;
- 3.9. Ensure availability of official information to develop ad-hoc indicators, in order to highlight the economic, social and environmental contribution of rural women in all their diversity, and quantify and assess their contributions to food security, nutrition and subsistence agriculture.

4. GUARANTEEING EQUAL ACCESS TO LAND, WATER, NATURAL AND OTHER PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

In Latin America and the Caribbean, only 18% of agricultural land is managed by women; however, this does not mean that they own the land. Data disaggregated by sex and ethnicity on land ownership is not always available, which, together with challenges related to tenancy and lack of legal protection, prevents women from accessing credit, technical assistance, and means of production on an equal basis.

Inheritance laws do not exclude women from land ownership, and currently women's land rights are recognized at the constitutional and/or legislative level in the majority of the countries of the region. However, cultural, institutional and socio-economic barriers prevent rural women and girls from accessing credit and land, which is not always jointly titled in the name of both partners in a marriage or union. Furthermore, customary practices often consolidate traditional and discriminatory roles. Faced with this situation we propose to:

- 4.1 Adopt comprehensive strategies that end discriminatory and racist attitudes, practices, and stereotypes, and ensure the participation and leadership of women in decisions on the management and governance of land, territory and natural resources, in line with General Recommendation No. 34 of the CEDAW Committee;
- 4.2 Increase women's access to land and guarantee women's rights in land titling, concession, adjudication, registration and title certification, regardless of their family situation or marital status, recognizing rural women's land rights, without any form of discrimination;
- 4.3 Protect the human rights and ensure the security of women defenders of collective and individual rights, related to the conservation of land, territories and environmental and natural resources, and criminalize the violence they face;
- 4.4 Emphasize the need for transnational corporations and other businesses to refrain from harming the wellbeing of women and girls in rural areas and take additional measures with regard to their responsibility and accountability, including the prevention, mitigation and remediation of human rights abuses;
- 4.5 Guarantee rural women in all their diversity access to production support services, science, technology, innovation and technical assistance, in order to develop good practices in production and commercialization.
- 4.6 Increase and guarantee rural women's access to timely and high-quality credit, production and commercialization services, financial services, financial education and technical specialized assistance;

- 4.7 Recognize women's right to the use, enjoyment and sustainable access to water as an essential resource for production and food security, protecting water resources in a sustainable manner;
- 4.8 Call on Member States to ratify and implement ILO Convention 169, which guarantees consultations to achieve free, prior, and informed consent as protection and defense measures for indigenous lands and territories;
- 4.9 Adopt measures and strategies to recognize, protect and guarantee the rights of Afro-descendant rural women to their lands and territories;
- 4.10 Ensure rural women in all their diversity priority access to humanitarian relief and recovery following natural hazards and disasters, when they are affected by flooding, earthquakes, land and soil degradation and water pollution;

IN CONCLUSION

The Ministries and Senior Officials of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean believe that it is possible to take decisive steps towards the empowerment of all rural women and girls in the region, despite the considerable challenges involved, and present a joint position and proposal, as a region, to the international community at the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Delegations from 29 Latin American and Caribbean countries participated in a productive two-day process of participatory discussions, which resulted in this agreed upon Santo Domingo Declaration, which we request to be submitted to the Foreign Affairs Ministries of each one of our States in order to inform the CSW62 negotiations in New York. At the same time, we call for the spirit of this Declaration to be included in the Agreed Conclusions to be adopted during CSW62.

We thank the participation of representatives of more than 60 civil society organizations and regional networks of women's and feminist organizations of Latin American and the Caribbean and recognize the value of their contributions.

The Ministers and Senior Officials of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women of the region express our special gratitude to the Government of the Dominican Republic, host country of the consultation, in particular the Ministry for Women, as well as the Institute for Women of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay (INMUJERES), and UN Women, for their support in organizing and hosting the Regional Consultation.

Adopted in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on 7 February 2018.

