



**Statement from United Cities and Local Governments
(UCLG) to the UN Commission on the Status of
Women 64 (CSW64) on Beijing+25**



UCLGWOMEN
An Equality Driven Movement

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We, mayors, local and regional elected representatives and our representative associations:

 **RECALL** the 1998 IULA Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Governments ; the 2013 Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and men in Local Life ; the 2006 European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

 **REMINDE** of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular Article 36 stating that international organizations, such as the World Organization of UCLG, have an important role to play in implementing the UN Platform for Action; and Agenda 2030, in particular goal 11 on sustainable cities, goal 5 on gender equality, in addition to the mainstreaming of gender equality in all other goals.

 **UNDERLINE** that, even if a significant rise regarding the mobilization of women in many regions across the world has been observed in the last years, the present decade has witnessed a visible threats towards gender equality and women's rights across continents. A backlash is being experienced, targeting institutional and policy framework for gender equality, including; gender mainstreaming, political participation, social and labor protection, education, sexual and reproductive health rights and the prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

 **ARGUE** the problems and challenges facing humanity are global, yet have to be dealt with at the local level. These challenges affect vulnerable populations and, in particular, women and girls, to a higher degree. Achieving gender equality requires sustained action of equal, democratic and sustainable local governments, where women and men have equal access to decision-making, resources and services, and receive equal treatment by said services.

 **STRESS** that a renewed and powerful commitment to gender equality, as well as its actual and effective assimilation into national, regional and local public policies is demanded. The contributions of local and regional governments are pivotal to achieving all 17 SDGs including SDG 5, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action. However, the work by local and regional governments towards achieving gender equality -in particular the enhancement of living conditions of women and girls, and improvement of equal access to the public sphere and decision making- is often overlooked in the international context.

 **COMMIT** to fostering gender equality also at the global level and to engage in Generation Equality through our World Organization by improving the status of women and promoting gender equality, considering that gender equality and the empowerment of women represent both a goal of, and a tool for, the sustainable development of all communities across the world, as laid out in SDG 5 in the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action.

 **CALL** upon national governments and the UN bodies gathered in New York for the CSW64 to provide adequate funding and to acknowledge the important role of local and regional governments in promoting gender equality. Hence, fueling a wider strategic and intersectional approach to the implementation of the goals set out in the UN 2030 Agenda, including SDG 5 on gender equality, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

 **CALL** upon cities, local and regional governments, women and men elected leaders across the world, to continue actively engaging in their critical role as safe keepers of local democracy, to multiply efforts and take concrete action and coercive measures for the effective localization and adequate implementation of equality, gender mainstreaming, the eradication of all gender-based violence and the empowerment of women and girls for all communities across all continents, leaving no one, and no place behind.

DECIDING FOR THEMSELVES

Gender-Based Violence

Local and regional governments are best placed to directly tackle harassment, violence and harmful practices against women in both the public and private spheres across all areas including the political, socio-cultural and economic fields. Local policies, the provision of accessible and qualitative local public services, and urban planning, particularly the creation and maintenance of public spaces which consider the specific needs of girls and women, are essential tools in tackling violence against women. In terms of prevention, local and regional governments have an important role to play in preventing violence against women and girls, protecting survivors and guaranteeing access to appropriate support and services such as shelters, counselling, medical and legal assistance, as well as in the promotion of the conditions for freedom, individual development and collective empowerment.

Economic justice and rights

In addition to their duty to ensure women's equal access to opportunities, land and economic and natural resources, local and regional governments can have a significant impact on women's lives by using fair employment practices and ensuring non-discriminatory service provision to citizens, as they are major employers, planners and service providers. They can establish mechanisms to make it easier for women to obtain basic legal documents, provide legal aid services that support them in exercising their rights, and guarantee their participation in land governance and policy-making processes. A large number of experiences, policies and actions towards the achievement of gender equality can be found directly on the ground.

Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

Local and regional governments are at the frontline to implement mechanisms that allow the guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights to be recognized and promoted as a human right, as defined by the UN, and to ensure its effective implementation in close collaboration and responsibility with relevant local actors, including health care providers. Local public policy-making can contribute to develop safer and fairer environments for women and girls to access knowledge and tools to guarantee autonomy of their bodies, including sexual and reproductive health. These rights must

not interfere with their ability to take an active role in social, economic and political life. In this regard, local and regional governments contribute to guarantee education for all (SDG4 on Quality Education), with special attention paid to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to education. Education must contribute to raise the awareness about gender stereotypes and their deconstruction, including intersectional perspectives, in order to start reducing gender inequalities and contribute to end gender-based violence.

International women movements and networks for climate justice

Women and girls, in particular women living in poverty, are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Women and girls tend to face higher risks due to gender bias, especially when it comes to their roles as primary caregivers, as well as in the collection of food and water. Yet, these women are often the ones who have least impacted our planet in terms of carbon footprint, but they often remain the most exposed. A transition from profit-based and destructive economies to just, gender-sensitive and locally driven practices need to be promoted by local and regional governments in order to achieve equitable, ecologically sustainable and people-centric societies.

Technology and innovation for Gender Equality

Technological innovation can provide opportunities for the advancement of women's rights and opportunities, but it can also present risks. The large gap between women and men in the digital sector clearly signals so.

Women's vocations and careers in technology are significantly lower than men's, which directly impacting both career opportunities and the decisions of technology companies. This, combined with the lack of gender-disaggregated data, has negative consequences on the ability of public policies and artificial intelligence and their ability to avoid reproducing gender biases. In this context, building and strengthening women's capacity in digital practices, promoting technological vocations among girls and young women, and collecting sex-disaggregated data is essential in the production of innovative and qualitative change via the development of monitoring and gender indicators. These practices are capable of informing further initiatives, actions and programs towards the full achievement of gender equality of rights and opportunities. Another concern is awareness-raising communication and advocacy activities, which must reach all age groups, and all social backgrounds. Tackling gender equality is fundamental, in order to guarantee ownership and to further facilitate the achievement of a sustainable result.

Leadership of international women movements and networks

In its progress report 2019 for the progress of SDG 5, the UN underline that women continue to be significantly underrepresented in leadership positions, at all levels of government, in most countries of the world. Local governments and political parties must act to improve women's representation in elected, administrative and appointed office at the highest levels in our own institutions. This can be achieved through a combination of anti-discrimination and positive action measures, additional support such as mentoring schemes, flexible working, and affordable childcare provision, as well as other mechanisms aiming at supporting and fostering policies that acknowledge the value of the care work mostly provided by women and enhancing awareness raising in our communities by fostering respect and when possible remuneration. This should also be influenced by local, regional, national and international women's movements and networks, together with the support of public decision-making by local and regional governments, assuming their responsibility to provide and promote mechanisms to strengthen Civil Society Organizations that work to achieve gender equality.



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