



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND  
www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org) – [cedaw@ohchr.org](mailto:cedaw@ohchr.org)

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Excellencies,

I have the honour to address this letter to you at a time when the General Assembly's Open Working Group (OWG) is concluding its work for 2014. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you for the laudable work and selfless commitment to build a strong foundation for future development. The release of the revised Zero Draft provides the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with the opportunity to present some essential contributions to the process on matters of women and development. The CEDAW Convention is not just the only nearly-universally ratified human rights instrument which provides for a comprehensive protection of women's rights, it is also an instrument for women's empowerment and equal participation as well as an international pillar for sustainable development.

It is acknowledged that women, who constitute more than fifty percent of the global population, are drivers of peace and sustainable development. It is, therefore, my sincere hope that this process will build on the lessons learnt from the process and outcome of the MDGs in seeking to improve women's rights and their empowerment.

You will recall that in February 2014, during my intervention at the eighth session of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, I made a call that the targets should be more ambitious than those of the MDGs. I also called for the inclusion of a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality. This call was reiterated by CEDAW in its comprehensive statement on the post-2015 development agenda and the elimination of discrimination against women, which was issued later in February 2014.

H.E. Mr. Csaba Kőrösi  
Permanent Representative of Hungary  
to the United Nations,  
Co-chair of the UN Open Working Group  
on Sustainable Development Goals

H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya  
to the United Nations,  
Co-chair of the UN Open Working Group  
on Sustainable Development Goals

I have noted with great appreciation the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the attempts at mainstreaming gender equality in the goals in both the Zero Draft and the subsequent revised text released on 30 June 2014. I think we can now say that there is a general consensus that the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals promote gender equality and empower women with a view to delivering on the promise of ensuring freedom from fear and want for all women and men, without discrimination.

Let me express the appreciation of the Committee for the many positive elements of the Zero Draft which underline the centrality of human rights and particularly women's rights to the development agenda. The Zero Draft forms a good basis on which to strengthen respect for women's rights, and it is this spirit of strengthening the work of the Open Working Group that the Committee makes the following suggestions. The Committee is of the view that the systematic mainstreaming of women's rights and a gender perspective through the goals and targets would vastly strengthen the coherence of the Zero Draft.

**First**, the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality (Goal 5) is particularly welcomed as it maintains a positive element of the MDGs in the post 2015 architecture. The Committee feels the overall importance of women's rights to the text would be strengthened by explicit references to the CEDAW Convention in the *chapeau* of the Zero Draft, and in the goals and targets themselves. Moreover, the contents of Goal 5 itself could be strengthened to explicitly include the substantive aspects of gender equality and non-discrimination as spelled out under the Convention.

**Second**, the Committee welcomed the inclusion of 'sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights' in Goal 5 and the health-related goal in the Zero Draft released on 2 June 2014. Regrettably, in the revised version of the Zero Draft, the target on "the universal access to sexual and reproductive health" under the health goal has been deleted. The Committee cannot accept this deletion and would like to underscore the importance that the full concept of 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' be captured and reflected in the draft, with consistent wording between the health and gender goals.

**Third**, the integration of good governance and rule of law norms into the Zero Draft will support the goals' ability to advance the rights of women. Therefore, I hope that a correct wording on discrimination intrinsically linked to the women's access to justice, resources, and political decision-making, including in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution, as provided by the Convention, will be adopted under Goals 5 and 16.

**Fourth**, attention to the situations that are impacting on women runs through many of the goals in the Zero Draft. However there are crucial gaps, particularly those goals addressing the means of implementation, water management, economic growth, sustainable industrialization, climate change, consumption and production patterns and resilient cities.

**Finally**, the emphasis that the Zero Draft places on an accountability framework and of disaggregated data is a very welcome development. In this regard, the Committee notes that its mechanisms of periodic review of country reports, individual complaints and inquiries and its 30 years of experience in tracking women's rights in almost all Member States are an invaluable and unique resource that should complement and contribute to the accountability mechanism that will eventually be adopted for the goals. The Committee, therefore, strongly suggests to the Open Working Group to ensure that there



is system-wide collaboration between the various actors within the United Nations system, at regional and national levels as well as the participation of civil society. The approach should prioritise the building of bridges between the human rights and development frameworks and communities.

Let me reaffirm the commitment of the CEDAW Committee to work with the Member States in this process with a view to ensuring the strongest possible integration of women's rights and gender in the post 2015 development architecture. I am deeply convinced that women's rights are an essential component for the attainment of sustainable development.

I thank you for the laudable work that you are undertaking, and I offer you the full support of the CEDAW Committee as we chart a new course of development founded on the normative standards accepted by the international community. Let me also reiterate my commitment and availability to provide input and continue our discourse on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Nicole Ameline  
Chairperson,  
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

cc.: Ms. Amina Mohammed  
Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary-General  
on Post-2015 Development Planning