

STATEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES* IN LIGHT OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM OF ACTION

We, civil society representatives, recognize the efforts made by the German government to implement Article 3, para 2, of the Basic Law: “Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist.” We are concerned, however, that real progress has been too slow for the majority of women and girls and that gender gaps still exist. Women remain undervalued and underrepresented, work more, earn less, and face multiple forms of violence.

We have to state that, since 1995, Germany has not created and adequately funded comprehensive, consistent, and sustainable gender action plans or roadmaps, to remove the systemic barriers that hold women back. The new German sustainability strategy (DNS) must meet the requirements of the 2030 Agenda to “leave no one behind”. It must take into account gender-based discrimination and disadvantage in all areas and include more gender transformative indicators.

Labour Participation

- Women make up for 49% of the total workforce but almost half of employed women work part-time while the same holds true for only app. 10% of men.
- The labour market is marked by significant gender segregation, i.e. women constitute app. 85% of the care professionals and 95% of the kinder garden teachers. On the other hand, only 17% of engineers and 16% of IT professionals are female.
- Women do over 50% more unpaid work in families and households than men.
- Women still earn app. 20% less than men do. The gender pay gap has remained on this high level for decades.
- The Gender Pension Gap is 59%.

We demand increased women’s labour participation, equal pay, better and more childcare facilities and individual taxation. We emphasize that an increased female employment rate and fair career opportunities will prevent poverty among women, especially in old ages.

We emphasize that the full participation of women in their diversity in economic relations and labour relations as well as in society at large is vital. Gender-equal societies are economically more successful and politically more stable. Economic relations based on equitable, fair, sustainable, and gender-responsive principles can play a significant part in advancing women’s human rights. The legislative on women on company boards has brought a rise of numbers of women in supervising boards but almost no change in management boards.

We emphasize that recognizing unpaid care work and motivating men to take up social professions will help eliminate gender stereotypes and create a more equitable society.

Political Representation and decision making

The representation of women in the political area (parliaments, politics) has gained momentum since the introduction of an internal gender quota in the 80s in the more progressive political parties represented in parliaments. However, parity is still far from

realized. The ratio of female MPs, especially of young MPs under 30, in parliaments of all levels has been on the decline again, among other reasons due to the rise of ultra-conservatives and right extremists. This endangers democracy in general as well as gender equality, women's rights and minority rights in particular.

We emphasize that binding gender quotas, alternating electoral lists and a reform of the electoral system will enhance women's political participation particularly at the decision-making level.

Climate change disproportionately affects women and girls. At the same time women and girls are leading the struggle against climate change since decades. Germany's current climate targets are not sufficiently ambitious to contribute the country's fair share of emissions reduction necessary to keep global warming within the Paris Agreement goals. We believe it is essential to listen to civil society's, especially young people's, demands of more comprehensive environment measures that take gender concerns and perspectives into account.

Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence against women and girls is persistently high in spite of reforms of the penal code for sexual offences.

- 40% of all over-16-year-old women have experienced physical and/or sexualized violence.
- 13% have experienced sexualized violence relevant to criminal prosecution.
- 42% have experienced psychological violence.
- One out of 4 women has experienced violence by her (ex)partner.
- One out of 10 women has experienced some kind of cyber violence since the age of 15.

We believe that implementing the "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence" (Istanbul Convention) will help ending violence against women at home and in public spaces. We need governments on the local, state and federal level to commit to introducing a legal right to protection; further developing support services and prevention measures at all levels and covering the costs of women's shelter accommodation as well as counselling for women who are victims of violence.

We emphasize that conflict-solving policies should include women at peace negotiations, specifically address women's needs, assist victims of sexualized violence and punish the perpetrators.

Final remarks

Germany is an important global player in the economic sphere and a politically leading force in Europe. However, it has failed to set new standards in pursuit of gender equality and missed the chance to become a gender equality champion. We urge political decision-makers to set up gender equality as a defense against nationalist and chauvinist forces, which strive to diminish the rights of women and minorities. Strengthening civil society is vital in this process and therefore needs robust and sustainable funding.

** This statement was issued by participants of the Beijing+25 preparatory meeting organized by UN Women Germany and Deutscher Frauenrat (National Council of German Women's Organizations)*

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