



The Delegation of France
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Commission on the Status of Women
Charlie Mortimer

Position Paper

"We are fighting for the freedom of women who should not have to live under the yoke of a chauvinist order." - French Prime Minister Manuel Valls¹

France, throughout history, has worked tirelessly to create and lead the much needed push towards gender equality in the world. France is not alone in our nation's hope for gender equality, and The Commission on the Status of Women proves the world recognizes the need for it as well. The Commission on the Status of Women was established through the Economic and Social Council through Council resolution 11(II) on June 21st, 1946. Created with the purpose of promoting women's rights and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, this commission meets annually in order to work towards, amend older, and create contemporary and essential resolutions that aide in achieving the primary goal of this committee: gender equality. The Commission on the Status of Women first met in Lake Success, New York in 1947. France being one of the original fifteen members to partake in this commission allowed it the rather unique perspective of understanding the foundation of the commission, and what it strives for.

. During its first session, the Commission put this forth as one of its guiding principles: "*to raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with*

¹ Valls, Manuel. "In France, Women Are Free." The Huffington Post. September 6, 2016. Accessed October 30, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/manuel-valls/in-france-women-are-free_b_11867242.html.

men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law.”²

France plays a large role, both economically and socially speaking, in Europe and the wider world, and thus understands its importance and dedication to this committee. With 84 million tourists visiting the wondrous landscape of France a year, we are aware that we must do our part, within our own country and countries around the world, to bridge any and all gaps between gender inequality. This Commission’s topics are vastly important in today’s world, as there are no countries who can boast complete and total gender equality. The delegation of France feels that these topics are widely interconnected in the sense that a solution in one will aide in the resolution towards the others. It is with this in mind that France hopes to work with all active and forward thinking member states in order to put an end to gender inequality, as it is a problem that everyone, no matter one’s gender, feels the repercussions of every day.

The delegation of France sees the topic of women’s role as it pertains to sustainability as an incredibly important one, and one that is extremely relevant alongside the two other topics. France sees this issue as one with a fundamental goal: to ensure women have a voice. The link between women and sustainable development has been addressed numerous times before, whether it be during the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 or the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action a year later, or the World Summit on Sustainable Development more recently. Many studies have shown that women are more inclined to protect the environment than men, with a press release from the forty sixth session of this very Commission of the Status of Women stating that fact. This, along with the fact that women are more affected by the adverse effects of a sustainable economy not being developed, is why France sees it crucial to create a system where women have the voice to speak out about their wants, needs, and opinions in a stigma free setting. It is because of the effect climate change has on women that it is imperative that a gender analysis be implemented, along with discussion among women, before any drastic actions are taken against climate change. Although there have been instances where women have been called on to partake in open discussion, such as the Convention to Combat Desertification of 2008, which recognizes the

² "Short History of the Commission on the Status of Women." CSW Short History. Accessed October 30, 2016. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/CSWbriefhistory.pdf>.

role played by women in regions of drought, it has clearly not been enough to warrant any change. A year later, the CEDAW Committee issued a statement on gender in regards to climate change, and expressed their worry about the absence of gender perspectives in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is because of this that the nation of France sees this issue as one that is about reducing stigma around women's needs (for instance the issue of correct disposal of menstrual waste), while also educating women about the importance of their role within their society, and creating a space where women are welcomed to speak their mind, and be respected members of a decision making process. France sees this issue as a complex one, and one that could inherently be partially solved by the possibly overarching solutions that will come forward in discussion of the other topics. This is because women's role in sustainable development within their community and globally is one that can only be fully achieved once a level of respect, self-worth, and education has been established for women within said community. It is because of this the delegation of France wishes to urge the committee to discuss the other two topics first, as their solutions will intrinsically aide in the encouragement and possibility of achieving communities around the globe where women are able to speak their mind, and better our world as a whole.

This Commission's decision to discuss and work towards eliminating of gender based violence is one that France sides with wholeheartedly. According to the ministry responsible for family affairs and women's rights, 223,000 women in France are physically or psychologically abused by their partners every year. This staggering number is one France takes very seriously, with the government mandating training on violence against women for doctors and midwives in 2013, and the commencement of a free national distress phone line in 2014. Without undermining the serious nature of the gender violence in our own country, we must also look outward to countries where gender-based violence is horrifyingly inconceivable and shockingly apparent. Many nations, such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh experience forced marriages and dowry related violence, which can include battering, marital rape, acid throwing, wife burning, along with other torturous techniques as methods of extortion. France as a nation condemns these horrific acts, and will work tirelessly to put an end to them. It is all too easy to see forced marriage as an issue only residing in developing country, and it must be known that is not the case. For instance, Switzerland, a country ranked eighth in the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report, has had around 1,400 young women forced to marry, end a relationship or divorce,

in the past two years (according to a study by the Neuchatel University for the Federal Migration Office of Switzerland). France is all too aware of this, and urges countries to take steps as our country has. With online communication, as well as telecommunication, France has enacted programs and outreach initiatives to educate our population on the dangers of forced marriage in developed countries. Along with marital assault, France sees it insurmountably important to put an end to female infanticide which occurs through countries throughout the world, simply because they are deemed worth less. India's Minister of Women and Child Development said in a 2015 interview that two thousand female infants are killed every day in India. The nation of France feels that in order to accurately solve the overarching issue of gender related violence, this Commission must push countries to firstly, make these acts illegal within their sovereign nation, and secondly to make certain there is available legal representation for women, as well as enforcement of the laws put in place in order to increase the level of accountability for those who commit these heinous acts. Lastly, France feels that education, as always, is one of the most vital pieces to putting an end to gender based violence. Education around women and women's rights, as well as their cultural importance, throughout all countries would increase levels of understanding and respect within their independent societies, which in the long run would make it possible to achieve the deserved exaltation of women in our global community.

The United Nations as a whole has always understood the importance of employment, and foremost education. The nation of France, while acknowledging there is still much to be done, praises the work accomplished by the United Nations in their commitment and dedication to universal education. In 2000, enrolment in primary education in developing nations was 83 percent. The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) held a World Education Forum in the same year, and created The Dakar Framework for Action - Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. Eight years later, with this framework implemented, primary education in these developing countries had reached 89 percent. It is with this progress in mind that France wishes to strive for universal education, not only at the primary levels but through secondary and tertiary. Within France, education is compulsory from ages six to sixteen, and higher education costs €532 (with a median household income of €18,800 this is relatively quite affordable). This being said, it is easy to boast efficient educational numbers in a developed and mostly economically stable country (although France's economy is waning in the wake of the tourism crisis caused by the recent attacks terrorism that have assaulted our

Nation). In the world today there are 31 million girls of primary school age not attending school, and of those, 17 million are not expected to ever see the inside of a classroom. This lack of education for girls in our world does not only hinder them, but also affects that nation's society negatively. UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report of 2013 stated the positive impact girl's education could have on society as a whole. Firstly, educated women (those who have completed primary education) are less likely to die in childbirth. Continuing on, women with education take care of themselves and their children better. This being said, it has been seen in history that women's education is important for any society to strive, the key is how to do so in an effective and efficient manner. France has already taken strides to achieve this, with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development having set up a working group in order to highlight the issue of gender based violence in schools. This group laid a foundation, so that (along with UNICEF, UNGEI and the Global Partnership of Education) France was able to organize a workshop in Burkina Faso, where State and non-State players addressed gender based violence in school, in order to integrate the understanding of such violence into sectoral planning. France sees these past actions as the much needed beginning to a long and necessary campaign to ensure the education of women around the globe, and wishes to continue to strive for solutions and collaborate with willing countries. Education and employment go hand in hand, and with World Bank data from 2014 showing the percentage of women within the world's labour force as 40%, it is clear that there is a level of inequality that must be put right. Again, this is not an issue that only plagues developing countries, but one that affects all countries. The nation of France has a wage gap of 19.2%, which in itself shows the inequality within the world, as France is dedicated to solving this, and all issues around gender inequality. Gender gaps in labour forces are especially large in regions such as Northern Africa, Western Asia, and Southern Asia. It is these widespread gaps that create a cycle of unemployment and lack of education for women, as it becomes what the next generations of girls see as a societal norm. It is because of this it is especially important to put emphasis on girl's education in these regions, with the long term goal of improving employment rates for women (for instance by offering economic grants for those who hire qualified female teachers). France has worked in the past, and hopes to continue to work, with the Global Partnership of Education, in order to see the increase in girl's education continue to climb globally. The nation of France believes that women's education and unemployment must be approached as a whole, with education being the first step in order to break the cycle of societal oppression of women's role within a culture.

The steps towards an increase in women's education must be taken with a simultaneous plan to introduce women into the country's labour force.

In conclusion, the nation of France will look to drive a collective conversation around gender equality, while working with member nations within this commission to find efficient solutions to the aforementioned issues for both the long run and the short run. France, an original member of this commission, is cognizant of the responsibility it has to the world on a global scale, as it is a driving economic and social force not only in Europe, but also the world. The blatant gender inequality in the world is seen to have an obvious effect on women, but it is important for all nations to understand that a gender imbalanced world fundamentally hinders our global society, not just because of social and economic reasons, but also because as human beings we are better off as a whole when showcasing compassion and equality to all.

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