Committee: Commission on the Status of Women

Topic: Women and Sustainability, Elimination of Gender-Based Violence, Women in Education and Employment

Country: Nigeria

School: Trafalgar School for Girls

The first topic, women and sustainability, explores the link between women and sustaining our planet, whether it is through preserving our history or reducing the waste left in the world. The second topic, elimination of gender-based violence, includes subjects such as arranged marriage, marital assault, and female infanticide. This topic mainly affects women, but can also have a big affect on men, as men are usually the second party in arranged marriages, and the perpetrators in marital assault. Finally, the topic of women in education and employment, is centred on the unequal pay rate between men and women, and the difference between the access to education that men have compared to women. This topic affects every employer in the world. Each of these topics is extremely important and it is imperative that they are discussed. Women play an important role in our world, and this cannot be overlooked.

UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon is one of the loudest voice's on the topic of women and sustainability. He has said, “Ours can be the first generation to end poverty – and the last generation to address climate change before it is too late." Climate change has been ignored for a long time, whether is was because of obliviousness, denial, or a mix of both, but many have agreed that the time to secure not only our future, but our planet's future, is now. The UN has had six separate conferences and reports on the environment (the most recent being in 2012) and ten on women. One of the most notable organizations on the topic of women and sustainability is Women & Sustainability (W&S) whose goal is to help women leaders working in sustainability through academic, professional, and personal development. On the topic of the elimination of gender-based violence, it is crucial to understand that although many bills and documents have been signed such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979, they alone cannot protect women against gender-based violence. Fortunately, organizations such as Voices Against Violence and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girls Scouts (WAGGGS) speak out against these acts of violence. Finally, the topic of women in education and employment. Kathy Calvin, the United Nations Foundation President & CEO, has said, “Girls are one of the most powerful forces for change in the world: When their rights are recognized, their needs are met, and their voices are heard, they drive positive change in their families, their communities, and the world.” It is not only important but critical that girls and women's rights and needs be considered as important as men's rights.

Women and sustainability has not been a large issue in Nigeria because 80% of Nigeria's farmers are women, and in many of Nigeria's rural areas it is one of the woman's many duties to secure food, water, fuel, and clothing. However, Nigeria does recognize this to be a problem that occurs in other countries. We propose that the UN form deeper connections with developing nations, focusing on how women help the environment and ways that their menstrual waste can be cleanly and efficiently disposed. Unfortunately, in many developing countries these needs are put aside to focus on other subjects, Nigeria feels these problems can no longer be ignored, no matter the financial situation of a country. Similarly, gender-based violence used to be a very big problem in Nigeria, from female genital mutilation to forced marriages. But since the passing of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill, Nigeria feels that the situation and state of gender-based violence has greatly improved. That said, Nigeria also understands that words and signatures alone cannot fix the situation in Nigeria. Therefore, we propose that the UN includes action in the next resolution. If a resolution is not imminent, Nigeria believes that one needs to be. Simply because it is no longer a problem in first world countries does not mean the problem has been solved. Lastly, women in education and employment is still an important and ongoing issue in Nigeria. Today, for every 2 boys who attend school in Nigeria, there is only 1 girl. In some states, it is 3 boys for every girl. Although UNICEF Nigeria worked on girl's education in 2005-2007, the situation was never solved. Therefore, Nigeria proposes that the UN adopt a policy stating that every child have equal access to education, which has been shown to decrease the teen pregnancy rate by 10% and increase the likelihood of a women's survival of childbirth.

Addressing the matter of women and sustainability, Nigeria proposes that the UN forms not only political, but common connections with the people who inhabit the third world countries. In getting rid of menstrual waste, we believe that burning the soiled sanitary napkins would be the best course of action, because the procedure of burying ruins soil that could be used for agriculture, a main food source for many rural women and families. Building connections with not only the politicians but the people is also smart because Nigeria feels that the people would give a more accurate description of what is happening inside the country than a politician would. Concerning gender-based violence, Nigeria suggests that the resolution involve action and rule enforcement. Despite Article 23 of the UDHR, guarantying equal pay for equal work, women still make 78 cents to the man's dollar. This is one of many examples of signing and agreeing without actually taking action. It is because of this reason that we feel like an action based policy is required. Another way to help prevent gender-based violence is education. Nigeria believes that if more girls were educated, gender-based violence would be reduced. This directly ties in with women in education and employment. We propose that a resolution stating that every child, no matter age, race, nationality, religion or sex, should have equal access to the right to education, which is also stated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ('Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.') As said earlier, Nigeria feels that many countries sign and forget, no matter how big, small, important, or simple. We believe that now is the time to act upon what we have already promised.

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