**SSUNS 2016 Position Paper for Commission on the Status of Women**

**Delegation**: Spain

**Name**: Amanda Depikolozvane

**School**: Mentor College

**Topic One: Women and Sustainability**

Throughout the world, nations are taking part in pivotal initiatives to allow women more opportunities to achieve sustainability. Developing countries are in need of the most support, as women have substantially less opportunities compared to developed nations. Spain, along with the global community, must continue to plan strategies to combat this issue. The European Union, Spain being apart of, funded the project; Fostering Gender Equality: Meeting the Entrepreneurship and Microfinance Challenge (Casteigts, 2007). This is an influential initiative as it provided Microfinance to women, in hopes of improving and inspiring entrepreneurship. This one strategy of Microfinance offers business loans of up to 25 000 euros to people in an effort to help women further themselves in the competitive business environment. With the help of more nations supporting these impactful strategies, the developing world will be affected positively.

Food security is another staggering issue that directly affects women in sustainability. Women play a critical role in all three components of food security: production, distribution, and utilization of food. Unfortunately in most developing nations, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, women own less than 2% of the land, with limited access to credit compared to males (Women and Sustainable Food Security, 2016). However, it has been proven that if women were allowed the same access to resources as men, women’s agricultural yields could increase by 20 to 30% (Habtezion, 2012). Additionally, the national agriculture production would rise by 2.5 to 4%, reducing the amount of malnourished people worldwide (Habtezion, 2012). As a result, it is pivotal that women be allowed the same access to credit and agricultural extension services. The community needs to create and continue to support organizations such as: Women for Women, which operates in many countries including; Afghanistan, Iraq, and Nigeria (Women for Women International, 2016). This spectacular agency created a comprehensive program to address the social and economic empowerment of women (Women for Women International, 2016). Not only does the organization teach women business skills, but also supports Microfinance (Women for Women International, 2016). With access to credit, women can invest in animals to help with sustainability in the farming industry. Therefore the international community must invest in these life-changing opportunities.

**Topic 2: Elimination of Gender- Based Violence**

The issue of cultural practices preventing women from receiving the equality they deserve it devastating. Violence is most commonly found in developing countries and is related to forced marriages and dowries. When forced marriages take place, this often leads to forced pregnancy, marital violence, and emotional distress on women. There is a chain reaction that occurs with this type of abuse. Not only does marital assault have psychological and physical impacts on women, but it has been noted that it affects the development of children, parent-child relationships, and perceptions of gender bias. Spain is an example of a country which has addressed this problem with the creation of the Gender Equality Law in 2007 (Casteigts, 2007). Countries with existing strong equalities must place pressure on the developing world which lacks this powerful legislature.

The United Nations has already created an international agreement such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to address and prevent discrimination against women (United Nations Human Rights, 2016). It enforces that appropriate measures are taken to ensure women are treated as equals to men. Nations must send monetary support in combination with volunteers to help education about rights in order to see results. In addition, pressure must be placed on countries with unethical human rights policies. An example is to employ trade embargoes or sanctions on these countries. Currently the EU has placed trade embargoes against Russia as a result of interfering in the conflict between government and militia in southeastern Ukraine. This is an example of an embargo that placed economic pressure on Russia to acknowledge their actions. In a similar way, Spain, would be interested in identifying countries with unethical gender-based laws. Further, the country could consider looking into lengthy measures, such as employing embargoes against countries that have severe gender-based violence.

Spain has already had success with and initiative called the Safe Cities “Free of Violence Against Women and Girls” in Quito, Ecuador (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean, 2016). This was lead by Spain, represented by its Agency for International Development Cooperation of Spain (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean, 2016). This mission put in place a programme that included the creation of support services for women survivors of sexual harassment. The initiative primarily focussed on four areas; keeping streets safer for women; family violence; risk management, and peaceful coexistence (UN Women Americas and the Caribbean, 2016). Training is given to women to increase their awareness about gender-based violence and to ensure that the unacceptable violence does not continue to be a natural part of life. This initiative is an example of Spain’s dedication and commitment to ensuring gender equality.

**Topic 3: Women in Education and Employment**

In order to ensure success in a nation, the population must be educated and have lots of employment opportunities. It is evident that women do not receive the same opportunities as men in these sectors. This is shown, as two thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female, according to UNESCO. Denying women the basic right of education limits the future ahead of them. Spain, however recognized that women would benefit greater during their education when gender-based violence was eliminated in both the home and school setting.

The Spanish initiative “Free of Violence Against Women and Girls” helps to end the unethical human rights violations by the developing world. As a result, the women that are affected by this initiative can learn in a violence free environment, maximizing a woman’s potential to learn. In addition, Canada also recognized the importance of allowing girls equal opportunities with the creation of: Because I Am A Girl, from Plan International (Plan Canada, 2016). This organization is known for educating both men and boys about gender equality and by engaging them in promoting girls’ and women’s rights (Plan Canada, 2016). Additionally, they keep schools safe for girls by creating a learning environment that is free of violence, abuse, and bullying (Plan Canada, 2016). Both strategies help to end the unethical human rights violations by the developing world. The global community must invest more in these exceptional strategies, as well as create more that can access all nations in need of help.

Although Spain’s employment rate of women is lower in comparison to the EU average, it is interested in executing strategies to promote more female involvement. Currently the difference is 11 percent between the male and female employment rate in Spain (Europa, 2016). There are approximately 63.2% of the Spanish men employed, compared to 52.0% of women (Europa, 2016). One strategy Spain has already started, with the help of Coca-Cola is the Project GIRA Women (Coca-Cola Company, 2016). This program has already 2 100 young individuals gain beneficial work experience (Coca-Cola Company, 2016). It currently is dedicated to helping women between 23 and 55 years old by giving them free training, advice and coaching from organizations specializing in female empowerment and business development (Coca-Cola Company, 2016). In addition, Spain looks to trailblazer countries such as Finland, Denmark, and Norway who have already lead the way in addressing employment opportunity issues. These commendable countries have created a framework that supports the empowerment of women through possibilities in the work force that were once non-existent. This is demonstrated as the gender gap has been closed at 80%, through the strong female labour force and lowering the salary gap between genders (Zahidi, 2016). Another notable improvement Norway made was enforcing that 40% of company boards, or leadership roles were filled by women (Zahidi, 2016). Ensuring legislation is created that forces nations throughout the world to conform to these standards is crucial to seeing success and will empower women.

**Works Cited**

Casteigts, Caroline. “Entrepreneurial Environment Study: Spain National Report.” *Women’s World Banking in Spain.* Aug. 2007. 5 Nov. 2016. Web.

“Coca-Cola Program in Spain Benefits Women Entrepreneurs, Boosts Employment Rates.” *Coca-Cola Company.* 24 Aug. 2016. 6 Nov. 2016. Web.

Habtezion, Senay. Gender, Climate Change and Food Security. Issue brief. Lance W. Garner. 2012. 6 Nov. 2016. Web

*Plan Canada.* “Because I Am A Girl.” 2016. 2015 Plan International Canada Inc. 5 Nov. 2016. Web.

“The current situation of gender equality in Spain.” *Europa.* 2012. 6 Nov. 2016. Web.

*United Nations Human Rights*. “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.” OHCHR. 2016. 5 Nov. 2016. Web.

*UN Women Americas and the Caribbean.* “Spain reaffirms commitment to promote gender equality.” UN Women. 16 March 2016. 6 Nov. 2016. Web.

“Women and Sustainable Food Security.” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 6 Nov. 2016. Web.

*Women for women International.* “What We Do.” 2016 Women for Women International. 2016. 5 Nov. 2016. Web.

Zahidi, Saadia. “What Makes the Nordic Countries Gender Equality Winners?” The Huffington Post. 5 Nov. 2016. Web.