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United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

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**Topic 1: Women and Sustainability**

An undeniable epidemic of toxic waste, unsustainable energy and gas pollution has surfaced with the arrival of the mass media and the technology that has both made us aware of these environmentally detrimental human actions and allowed us to effectively study its causes. Indeed, enormous issues such as chemical poisoning of individuals or crops, the emission of greenhouse gases and nuclear environments are just a few of the events that leave disastrous consequences, and that quickly are causing the decay of our planet[[1]](#footnote-1). As an example, nuclear radiation felt in regions such as Bhopal[[2]](#footnote-2) have long-lived consequences on both individuals present at the time of the human-caused disaster and on their children, as well as on the environment, as radiations affect fertility of the soil. However, a crucial and integral aspect of the potential solution is rarely talked about; particularly, the role that women have in these initiatives, and how encouraging female involvement could have enormous potential benefits.

The United Kingdom has been a part of the fight for the environment for a significant period, with specific interest in reducing landfill waste, protecting parks, marine and wildlife reserves within the territory as well as regulating the pollution of the air and water: all important issues that directly affect our nation[[3]](#footnote-3). The government has also taken pride in encouraging organisations who have taken upon themselves responsibility in the fight for the environment, such as Natural England or the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs[[4]](#footnote-4). Non-for-Profit organizations have also taken it upon themselves to provide assistance and to generate discussion on the role that women take in the environment, such as the Women’s Environmental Network, which gives a voice to women in the fight for sustainability[[5]](#footnote-5). The Energy Managers Association (EMA) would be another example, which focuses on encouraging women to join educational field relating to management in order to have a bigger voice in the environmental movement, particularly in the scientific field of green energy[[6]](#footnote-6). Additionally, the United Kingdom has been known to be extremely interested in women’s issues, aiding the success of the previously mentioned NGOs.

A variety of solutions arise when looking at the direct causes of the lack of female involvement in environmental issues, more precisely the stigma associated with women in some countries as well as poor representation of women in positions of power with the capacity of influencing environmentally inclined decisions. Indeed, representation issues can be effectively solve by targeting societal stereotypes dictating a person’s profession and its link with gender. Educational programs such as these can easily be applied by NGOs in foreign regions dealing with exponentially worse versions of this issue to generate professional and political women with a voice to speak up[[7]](#footnote-7). Compensation, whether material or monetary, could be awarded for women struggling with ownership rights, which themselves must be subject to universal standards, for their farms: women who statistically are more environmentally inclined[[8]](#footnote-8). Stigma issues are inherent to the problem as well, specifically regarding problems caused to the environment by strictly female occurrences, such as menstrual waste, which is often dealt with in problematic fashion due to shame or embarrassment[[9]](#footnote-9). A dual-approach could be considered for this issue, through the funding of disposable menstrual alternatives, such as the THINKS initiative, which has partnered with AFRIpads to offer short-term relief to young girls missing school due to their menstrual cycle[[10]](#footnote-10), and through the funding of biodegradable and sustainable method of disposal, such as water hyacinth pads[[11]](#footnote-11). These are but a few of the solutions that our nation will explore in the context of this committee.

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

Through the media era, global populations have been subject to systemic and social violence inflicted upon women through a variety of mechanisms. Whether it be through controlling female sexuality through selective abortions, genital mutilation, forced pregnancy, or cultural norms such as young marriage, which seriously impairs female education, these forms of discrimination completely stagnate the social movement for equality, both off and on paper[[12]](#footnote-12). These issues are systemically inherent to a large cluster of countries around the world, obviously demanding a response from Western Liberal Democracies that have grown to condone these types of actions; a response that has been strongly influenced by the cultural relativity theory.

Within the nation, the United Kingdom has adopted a series of initiatives comprised in a governmental strategy to end violence against women, one to be implemented between 2016 and 2020[[13]](#footnote-13). This strategy has included funding for refuge and crisis centres for women, for example[[14]](#footnote-14). The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has long been an ally in the fight for women’s rights, and is a strong advocate for strict guidelines and rules to prevent any type of violence against women from happening. Overall, our nation has had a very policy-based approach[[15]](#footnote-15).

Unsurprisingly, considering the number of advisory documents having seen the light of day and attempting to end these violent scenarios faced by women and having failed at doing so, the UK would propose a series of enforceable rules defining these actions as crimes and furthermore dictating punishment for countries reinforcing and encouraging them. Similarly, accountability remains important with this topic, with actors that may not be governmental in these countries, for example individuals clinic refusing to stop selective abortions, aid may be supplied to governments willing to impose regulations. Universal standards could be set for minimal marriage age in countries without such regulations. The most important initiative for this committee to follow through with remains completely stopping these violent threats for women, especially considering the domino effect they create in stagnating education and furthermore in butchering women’s roles in important international issues such as environmental initiatives.

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

In very concrete relation with the previous topics, issues in women’s access to education and employment are symptoms of systemic and social gender segregation, and furthermore have serious consequences on women’s role in serious international movements. A variety of developing nations have incredibly low rates of female education, more precisely countries like Liberia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Benin, Yemen, Somalia, Niger or Pakistan for example[[16]](#footnote-16). Rates of literacy, high-paying jobs and political influence are almost always lower for women than men globally; an alarming statistic[[17]](#footnote-17).

Much like a variety of Western Liberal Democracies, the United Kingdom has lived through times of limited female education, more precisely with very low rates of high level education attended by women[[18]](#footnote-18). However, as a result of the breaking down of stigma, access to media information and a Western movement towards systemic equality, it is now easy, following regulation, for any women to have access to education. However, much like the majority of nations of the world, alarming numbers can be found regarding women in business, political or scientific fields[[19]](#footnote-19). In fact, these gaps have been felt stronger in our nation than in Canada or the USA, for example[[20]](#footnote-20). The government has funded various initiatives to make leaders out of women in fields where they are not given a voice, especially targeting the strange gap between male and female teachers in schools, which is reminiscent of old eras[[21]](#footnote-21). The United Kingdom indeed generally has a root-cause approach and goes through with tackling the source of the problems faced by women in education.

Much like for a variety of other social issues, importance lies in changing the way people think about women’s roles in the world, and empowering and encouraging women into advanced careers around the world. Ankur Kala, for example, is an organization that uses funds generated through fair trade to send western workers to teach seminars to working-age women regarding leadership skills, encouraging those women to become entrepreneurs and teaching them the required skills to do so. AIESEC, another organization specializing in teaching, among other leadership initiatives, that has been around since the second world war, shares volunteers between bases around the world to teach teenage children in these nations to have an international view of the world, a vital skill for business-related jobs. These types of organizations can be incredibly helpful for helping women have the drive and interest for career involving higher power. Financial accessibility also becomes a burden for professional women in underdeveloped areas, which generates the need for financial aid. Overall, this global epidemic has also seen great change from feminist course, specifically in Western Liberal Democracies, which open people’s minds to the issue and generate awareness, something that is surely needed for this cause.

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