 

**Statement of the Civil Society Roundtable in advance of the12th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers meeting (12WAMM), held 16th and 17th September 2019 at Movenpick Hotel & Residences, Nairobi, Kenya**

**Preamble**

1. We, the representatives of Civil Society Organisations from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean met in Nairobi, Kenya on 16th and 17th September, 2019, ahead of the Senior Official’s Meeting on 18th September and the 12th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministerial meeting (12WAMM) taking place 19th and 20th September 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme *“From Commitment to Action: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment for Sustainable Development”.*
2. Highly appreciate and are encouraged by the commitment of the host Government of Kenya, through the 12WAMM Chair, the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers, Senior Officials, Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation, to engage with civil society represented by women’s rights activists from the Commonwealth.
3. Recognizing that 25 years have passed since Beijing and ICPD commitments were made.
4. Concerned that

* violence against women and girls continues to be a life-and-death health and developmental challenge,
* women’s political representation remains low with only a few countries that have passed the 30% threshold,
* large numbers of women remain relegated to the margins of the economy in the informal sector where they are exploited, harassed and criminalized in violation of their social and economic rights
* national machineries for gender equality are grossly underfunded, very often with the least budget among other ministries.

1. Alarmed at the extent of the climate crisis and its adverse impacts, particularly on women and girls, who are more likely to die, be displaced and struggle to recover from climate disasters. Yet climate change responses are often ‘gender blind’, ignoring or even exacerbating existing inequalities.
2. We therefore call upon the Women’s Affairs Ministers and Commonwealth Member States, with reference to the four pillars of the Commonwealth gender priorities, namely:

* Gender & Climate Change;
* Ending Violence Against Women and Girls;
* Women in Leadership; and
* Women’s Economic Empowerment,

to action the following recommendations:

**Resourcing women’s rights and gender equality**

1. Allocate at least 15% of all sectoral budgets to women’s economic empowerment, particularly agriculture, natural resources, trade and industry, infrastructure, credit, and skills and technology.
2. Allocate at least 30% of the national budget for gender machineries (inclusive of ministries, civil society, and communities) and the realisation of women’s rights and gender equality commitments through progressive taxation.
3. Provide affordable and innovative public finance for women and marginalised groups, such as through the revival of rural development or cooperative banks and with an eye on support for women in the informal sector and digital economy.
4. Demand meaningful international climate financing to address the gendered impacts of the climate crisis, for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage in countries of the global south, particularly small island developing states.
5. Commit and dedicate independent and flexible fund to sustain the transformative preparedness and emergency response work by women-led organizers and local frontline communities.
6. Allocate resources toward measures to recognise, reduce redistribute and reward women’s unpaid care work particularly through the provision of affordable public services.

**Institutions and leadership**

1. Legislate and enforce quotas of a minimum 50% of women in politics and decision-making in compliance with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Maputo Protocol.
2. Build strong financial, economic and legal expertise in Gender Ministries to enable them to participate actively and effectively in trade, investment and finance negotiations and national budgeting for the benefit of women social and economic empowerment.
3. Partner with civil society organisations to play an intersectoral coordinating role in addressing women's rights.
4. Given the current challenging global context and its impact on women’s lived realities, realign and assert the mandate and autonomy of women’s ministries to deliver on women’s human rights.

**Accountability**

1. Women and Gender Affairs Ministries must track compliance with international commitments and national laws across all sectors, especially agriculture, mining, natural resources, trade and industry, labour and infrastructure.
2. Monitor Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs), the private sector, public debt, treaties and public private partnerships to ensure that these economic investments do not impact negatively on women’s rights and agency.
3. Support clarity, understanding and dissemination of information on states’ human rights obligations to duty bearers, the general public, particularly marginalized groups, and other stakeholders.
4. Invest in research and disaggregated data as they relate to the four pillars to enable planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
5. Support the document of women’s rights violations particularly all forms of gender based violence.
6. As civil society we affirm the Ministers of Women’s Affairs’ role and responsibility and are fully committed to partnering, collaborating and supporting you towards fulfilling the commitments made by our governments to realise women’s rights and gender equality.

Signed on this day of 16 September 2019 by the 40 Civil Society Organisation representatives from the Caribbean and Americas, East, West and Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific attending the 16 and 17 September 2019 *Civil Society Roundtable in advance of the 12th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (12WAMM)*, Nairobi, Kenya