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Agenda item 26 (a)

Advancement of women: advancement of women

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019

[on the report of the Third Committee ([A/74/392](#))]

74/126. Improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions [56/129](#) of 19 December 2001, [58/146](#) of 22 December 2003, [60/138](#) of 16 December 2005, [62/136](#) of 18 December 2007, [64/140](#) of 18 December 2009, [66/129](#) of 19 December 2011, [68/139](#) of 18 December 2013, [70/132](#) of 17 December 2015 and [72/148](#) of 19 December 2017,

Reaffirming the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and also that all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women and girls, are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,² the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,² the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,³ the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁴ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵ and other human rights instruments,

Reaffirming also the commitment made to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including those in rural areas, contained in the outcome documents of relevant international conferences and summits, in particular the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,⁶ the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first

¹ Resolution [217 A \(III\)](#).

² See resolution [2200 A \(XXI\)](#), annex.

³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2515, No. 44910.

⁶ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.



century”⁷ and the outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples,⁸ and recalling other instruments, as appropriate, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development,⁹

Reaffirming further the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,¹⁰ and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,¹¹

Recalling that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses the need to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in order to ensure that no one is left behind, and that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is crucial,

Recognizing that the achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities,

Taking note of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment,

Recalling the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-second session¹² and its priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”,

Looking forward to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in New York on 23 September 2020,

Recognizing that progress on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in particular in rural areas, has been held back owing to the persistence of historical and structural unequal power relations between women and men, poverty and inequalities and disadvantages in access to resources and opportunities that limit women’s and girls’ capabilities, and growing gaps in equality of opportunity, discriminatory laws, policies, social norms, attitudes, harmful customary and contemporary practices and gender stereotypes,

Expressing its deep concern that discrimination and violence against women and girls, including those in rural areas, continue to occur in all parts of the world and that all forms of violence and discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, that women and girls face are impediments to the development of their full potential as equal partners with men and boys in all aspects of life, as well as obstacles to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Expressing its deep concern also that, while women contribute more than 50 per cent of the food produced worldwide, they account for 70 per cent of the world’s hungry, and that women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty, in part as a result of gender inequality and discrimination,

Expressing concern that many rural women continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and

⁷ Resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

⁸ Resolution 69/2.

⁹ Resolution 41/128, annex.

¹⁰ Resolution 70/1.

¹¹ Resolution 69/313, annex.

¹² *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2018, Supplement No. 7 (E/2018/27)*, chap. I, sect. A.

opportunities and their limited access or lack of access to quality education, health-care services, justice, land, sustainable and time- and labour-saving infrastructure and technology, water and sanitation and other resources, as well as to credit, extension services and agricultural inputs, and expressing concern also about their exclusion from planning and decision-making and their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work,

Emphasizing that rural women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy and the lack of access to economic and productive resources, quality education and support services and of women's participation in the decision-making process, and recognizing that rural women's poverty and lack of empowerment as well as their exclusion from social and economic policies can place them at increased risk of violence that can impede their social and economic development, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recognizing that, despite gains in providing access to quality education, rural girls are still more likely than rural boys to remain excluded from education and that among the gender-specific barriers to girls' equal enjoyment of their right to education are the feminization of poverty, child labour undertaken by girls, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, early and repeat pregnancies, all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, abuse and harassment on the way to and from and at school, in their technology-mediated environment, the lack of safe and adequate sanitation facilities, including for menstrual hygiene management, the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work performed by girls and gender stereotypes and negative social norms that lead families and communities to place less value on the education of girls than that of boys and may influence the decision of parents to allow girls to attend school,

Recognizing also the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security¹³ and the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems,¹⁴ endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security, which embrace gender equality as one of the main guiding principles of implementation in order to help to address the ongoing disparities with regard to access to and control of land and other natural resources,

Deeply concerned that climate change poses a challenge to poverty eradication and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, threatens food security and increases the risks of famine and adversely impacts the health and well-being of rural women and their families, and that rural women and girls, especially in developing countries, are disproportionately affected by the impacts of desertification, deforestation, sand and dust storms, natural disasters, persistent drought, extreme weather events, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification and often have limited capacities to adapt to climate change,

Recognizing that women and girls in rural areas may be particularly vulnerable to violence because of multidimensional poverty and lack of access to social care and protection services and, as applicable, employment opportunities, as well as negative social norms,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;¹⁵

2. *Urges* Member States, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society, as appropriate, to continue their efforts to

¹³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document CL 144/9 (C 2013/20), appendix D.

¹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, document C 2015/20, appendix D.

¹⁵ A/74/224.

implement the outcome of and to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the relevant United Nations conferences and summits, including their reviews, and to attach greater importance to the improvement of the situation of rural women and girls in their national, regional and global development strategies by, inter alia:

- (a) Creating an enabling environment for improving their situation and ensuring systematic attention to their needs, priorities and contributions, as well as gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including through enhanced cooperation and a gender perspective, and the full and equal participation of all women in the development, implementation and follow-up of macroeconomic policies, including development policies and programmes and poverty eradication strategies, including poverty reduction strategy papers, where they exist, aimed at implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;¹⁰
- (b) Encouraging Member States to consider adopting and pursuing national financial inclusion strategies and gender-responsive strategies to end the structural barriers to women's equal access to economic resources and to expand peer learning, experience-sharing and capacity-building in rural areas;
- (c) Supporting the important role of civil society in promoting the realization and fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women, including rural women;
- (d) Taking steps in the design, implementation and pursuit of fiscal policies and gender-responsive budgeting to promote gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
- (e) Pursuing the political and socioeconomic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, including through affirmative action, where appropriate, including by promoting and protecting the right to vote and to be elected and the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and through support for women's and farmers' organizations in which subsistence and smallholder women farmers are members, labour unions, cooperatives or other associations and civil society groups promoting rural women's rights;
- (f) Promoting consultation with and the participation of rural women and, as appropriate, girls, including those who are indigenous, those with disabilities and older women, through their organizations and networks, in the design, development and implementation of and follow-up to programmes and strategies for gender equality, the empowerment of women and rural development;
- (g) Ensuring that the perspectives of rural women and girls are taken into account and that rural women fully, meaningfully and equally participate in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to conflict prevention, the mitigation of post-conflict situations, peace mediation, the impacts of climate change and emergencies, including natural disasters, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, and taking appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against rural women and girls in this regard;
- (h) Integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation and evaluation of and follow-up to development policies, plans and programmes, including budget policies, where lacking, ensuring coordination between line ministries, gender policymakers, gender machineries and other relevant government organizations and institutions with gender expertise, and paying increased attention to the needs of rural women and girls to ensure that they benefit from policies and programmes adopted in all spheres and that the disproportionate number of rural women living in poverty is reduced;

- (i) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in decision-making processes and the governance of natural resources, leveraging the participation and influence of women in managing the sustainable use of natural resources, and enhancing the capacities of Governments, civil society and development partners to better understand and address gender issues in the management and governance of natural resources;
- (j) Implementing effective, high-impact, quality-assured, people-centred, gender- and disability-responsive and evidence-based interventions to meet the health needs of rural women and girls, particularly those in vulnerable situations, throughout their life course;
- (k) Strengthening measures, including resource generation, to improve women's health, including maternal health, by addressing the specific health, nutrition and basic needs of rural women and taking concrete measures to enhance and provide access to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health for women of all ages in rural areas, as well as quality, affordable and universally accessible primary health care and support services, including prenatal and postnatal health care, emergency obstetric care, family planning, information and education, increasing knowledge, awareness and support for the elimination of harmful practices and the prevention, treatment and care of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,¹⁶ the Beijing Platform for Action¹⁷ and the outcome documents of their review conferences;
- (l) Strengthening the prevention, treatment and care of infections, such as HIV, in rural areas, by providing accessible information, social care services and infrastructure;
- (m) Taking appropriate measures to ensure that women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, as well as contributions to on-farm and off-farm production, is recognized, including by fully recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family, and to promote nationally appropriate policies and initiatives supporting the reconciliation of work and family life and the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women with a view to reducing and equitably distributing such unpaid work, including through, inter alia, the provision of infrastructure, technology and public services, such as water and sanitation, renewable energy, transport and information and communications technology, as well as addressing the need for accessible, affordable and quality childcare and care facilities in rural areas;
- (n) Promoting sustainable, gender-responsive, quality, reliable and resilient infrastructure, including by scaling up investment in health facilities in rural areas and by improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, including through provisions for menstrual hygiene management, and safe cooking and heating practices to improve the health and nutrition of rural women and girls;
- (o) Investing in and strengthening efforts to meet the basic needs of rural women, including needs relating to their food security and nutrition and that of their families, and to promote adequate standards of living for them, as well as decent conditions for work and improved access to local, regional and global markets through improved availability, access to and use of critical rural infrastructure, such as energy

¹⁶ Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

¹⁷ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

and transport, science and technology, local services, capacity-building and human resources development measures and the provision of a safe and reliable water supply and sanitation, nutritional programmes, affordable housing programmes, education and literacy programmes, social support measures and health care, including HIV prevention, treatment, care, including psychosocial aspects, and support services;

(p) Fully engaging men and boys, including community leaders, as strategic partners and allies in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including by working to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys;

(q) Eliminating all forms of violence against rural women and girls in public and private spaces through multisectoral and coordinated approaches to prevent and respond to violence against rural women and girls, to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against rural women and girls and end impunity and to provide protection as well as equal access to comprehensive social, health and legal services for all victims and survivors to support their full recovery and reintegration into society, including by providing access to psychosocial support and rehabilitation, and bearing in mind the importance of all women and girls living free from violence, such as gender-related killings, including femicide, and harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as of addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls through enhanced prevention measures, research and strengthened coordination and monitoring and evaluation, by, inter alia, encouraging awareness-raising activities;

(r) Designing and implementing national policies and legal frameworks that promote and protect the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by rural women and girls, and creating an environment that does not tolerate violations or abuses of their rights, including domestic violence, sexual violence, gender-based violence and discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;

(s) Promoting safe public spaces for women and girls in rural areas and improving their security and safety, including in public transportation systems and infrastructure, preventing and eliminating violence and harassment against women on their journey to and from work, and protecting women and girls from being physically threatened or assaulted, including from sexual violence, while collecting household water and fuel and when accessing sanitation facilities outside their homes or practising open defecation;

(t) Ensuring that the rights of older women in rural areas are taken into account with regard to their equal access to basic social services, appropriate social protection and/or social security measures, equal access to and control of economic resources and their empowerment through access to financial and infrastructure services, with special focus on the provision of support to older women, including indigenous women, who often have access to few resources and are often more vulnerable;

(u) Valuing and supporting the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women in rural areas, in the conservation and sustainable use of traditional crops and biodiversity for present and future generations as an essential contribution to food security and nutrition, recognizing that rural women are disproportionately affected by biodiversity loss and land degradation and should therefore be meaningfully engaged in efforts to address such matters;

(v) Promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities in rural areas, including by ensuring access on an equal basis to productive employment and decent

work, economic and financial resources and disability-sensitive infrastructure and services, in particular in relation to health and education, as well as by ensuring that their priorities and needs are fully incorporated into policies and programmes, through, inter alia, their participation in decision-making processes;

(w) Developing specific assistance programmes and advisory services to promote economic skills of rural women in banking, modern trading and financial procedures, including financial literacy and consumer protection, and providing microcredit and other financial and business services to a greater number of women in rural areas, in particular female heads of households, for their economic empowerment;

(x) Supporting women entrepreneurs and women smallholder farmers, including those in subsistence farming, by continuing to provide public investment and to encourage private investment in rural women to close the gender gap in agriculture, and facilitating their access to extension and financial services, agricultural inputs and land, water, sanitation and irrigation, markets and innovative technologies;

(y) Mobilizing resources, including at the national level and through official development assistance, for increasing women's access to existing savings and credit schemes, as well as targeted programmes that provide women with capital, knowledge and tools that enhance their economic capacities;

(z) Seeking to ensure and improve equal access for rural women to decent work in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, supporting and promoting opportunities in small and medium-sized enterprises, sustainable social enterprises and cooperatives and improving working conditions;

(aa) Investing in infrastructure and in time- and labour-saving technologies, including sustainable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation and information and communications technologies, especially in rural areas, benefiting women and girls by reducing their burden of domestic activities, affording the opportunity for girls to attend school and for women to engage in self-employment or to participate in the labour market;

(bb) Taking appropriate measures to raise public awareness among rural women and girls about the risks of trafficking in persons, including the factors that make rural women and girls vulnerable to trafficking, and eliminating the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation against them, including sexual exploitation and forced labour;

(cc) Supporting remunerative non-agricultural employment for rural women, including in the informal sector, including measures to improve working conditions, increase access to productive resources, invest in relevant infrastructure, public services and time- and labour-saving technologies, promote rural women's paid employment in the formal economy and address the structural and underlying causes of the difficult conditions faced by rural women;

(dd) Taking steps to build the capacities and skills of rural women and their enterprises and cooperatives and to design or develop and implement procurement policies and measures to enable rural women and their enterprises and cooperatives to benefit from public and private sector procurement processes, recognizing that the promotion of rural women's enterprises and cooperatives can sustainably contribute to the economic empowerment of rural women;

(ee) Promoting programmes and services to enable rural women and men to reconcile their work and family responsibilities and to encourage men throughout their life cycle to share, equally with women and girls, household, childcare and other care responsibilities;

(ff) Developing and adopting strategies to decrease women's and girls' vulnerability to environmental factors, including gender-responsive strategies on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, to support the resilience and adaptive capacities of women and girls to respond to the adverse effects of climate change, through, inter alia, the promotion of their health and well-being, as well as access to sustainable livelihoods, and the provision of adequate resources to ensure women's full participation in decision-making at all levels on environmental issues, in particular on strategies and policies related to the impacts of climate change, such as desertification, deforestation, sand and dust storms and natural disasters, persistent drought, extreme weather events, sea level rise, coastal erosion and ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity, on the lives of rural women and girls, and ensuring the integration of their specific needs into humanitarian responses to natural disasters, into the planning, delivery, implementation and monitoring of disaster risk reduction policies, in particular urban and rural infrastructure and land-use planning and resettlement and relocation planning during the aftermath of natural disasters, and into sustainable natural resources management;

(gg) Building the resilience of rural women and girls, in particular women smallholder farmers, to climate change and environmental degradation (inter alia, deforestation, desertification and the loss of agricultural biodiversity), including by promoting appropriate use of relevant ancestral, indigenous and modern technological practices and knowledge and strengthening access to extension services, information and training;

(hh) Considering the adoption, where appropriate, of national legislation to protect the knowledge, innovations and practices of women in indigenous and local communities relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies;

(ii) Addressing the lack of quality, accessible, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex and age and statistical information on disabilities, to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind, including by intensifying efforts to include women's unpaid work in official statistics, and developing a systematic and comparative research base on rural women that will inform policy and programme decisions;

(jj) Strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and other relevant government institutions to collect, analyse and disseminate data, disaggregated by sex and age, and gender statistics on time use, unpaid work, land tenure, energy, water and sanitation, among other things, to support policies and actions to improve the situation of rural women and girls and to monitor and track the implementation of such policies and actions;

(kk) Guaranteeing the universal registration of births, including in rural areas, and ensuring the timely registration of all marriages for individuals living in rural areas, including by removing physical, administrative, procedural and any other barriers that impede access to registration and by providing, where lacking, mechanisms for the registration of customary and religious marriages, bearing in mind the vital importance of birth registration for the realization of the rights of individuals;

(ll) Designing, revising and implementing laws to ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal rights to own and lease land and other property, including through the equal rights to economic and productive resources, access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including banking and microfinancing, and undertaking administrative reforms and all necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, finance, appropriate technologies and vocational training, to improve access to markets and information and to ensure their equal access to justice and legal support;

(mm) Taking appropriate measures to adopt or develop legislation and policies that provide rural women with access to land and support women's cooperatives and agricultural programmes, including for subsistence agriculture, in order to contribute to school feeding programmes as a pull factor to keep children, in particular girl children, in school, noting that school meals and take-home rations attract and retain children in schools and recognizing that school feeding is an incentive to enhance enrolment and reduce absenteeism, especially for girls;

(nn) Supporting a gender-sensitive education system, including through approaches that attract and retain female students and teachers and that consider the specific needs of rural women and girls in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies affecting them, including through community-based dialogue involving women and men and girls and boys;

(oo) Eliminating gender disparities in the realization of the right to education and ensuring full and equal participation in and completion of inclusive quality education (primary, secondary and tertiary education, including vocational and technical education), as well as early childhood education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for rural women and girls and the elimination of female illiteracy, including through eliminating the discriminatory policies of excluding pregnant and married girls from schools, quality teacher training, recruitment and retention of teachers in rural areas, especially women teachers where they are underrepresented, and building gender-sensitive education facilities that provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all and facilitate an effective transition from education or unemployment to decent work;

(pp) Promoting education, training and relevant information programmes for rural and farming women through the use of affordable and appropriate technologies and the mass media, and taking concrete measures to improve rural women's skills, productivity and employment opportunities through technical, agricultural and vocational education and training;

3. *Encourages* Member States, United Nations entities and all other relevant stakeholders to promote access to social protection for female-headed rural households;

4. *Encourages* Member States, appropriate United Nations entities and all other relevant stakeholders to promote the full and equal participation of rural women, including indigenous women as well as women farmers, fishers and agricultural workers, in sustainable agricultural and rural development;

5. *Requests* the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular those dealing with issues of development, to address and support the empowerment of rural women and their specific needs in their programmes and strategies;

6. *Stresses* the need to identify the best practices for ensuring that rural women have access to and full and equal participation in the area of information and communications technology, to address the priorities and needs of rural women and girls as active users of information and to ensure their participation in developing and implementing global, regional and national information and communications technology strategies, taking appropriate educational measures to eliminate gender stereotypes regarding women in the field of technology;

7. *Encourages* Member States to consider the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerning their reports to those Committees when formulating policies and designing programmes focused on the improvement of the situation of rural women, including those to be developed and implemented in cooperation with relevant international organizations;

8. *Invites* Governments to promote the economic empowerment of rural women, including through entrepreneurship training, and to adopt gender-responsive and climate-sensitive rural development strategies and agricultural production, including budget frameworks and relevant assessment measures, as well as to ensure that the needs and priorities of rural women and girls are systematically addressed and that they can effectively contribute to poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and food security and nutrition;

9. *Invites* Governments, relevant international organizations, the specialized agencies and civil society organizations to continue to observe the International Day of Rural Women annually, on 15 October, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution [62/136](#);

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session a report on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas.

*50th plenary meeting
18 December 2019*
