



Statement by Global Unions following the 63rd UN Commission on the Status of Women

Unions reaffirm that a human rights-based approach is critical for achieving gender equality

The 63rd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW), which took place between 11-22 March 2019, resulted in Agreed Conclusions that largely set out a comprehensive approach to making social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure optimal for achieving gender equality and advancing the empowerment of women and girls.

Global Unions welcome many aspects of the Agreed Conclusions and the commitments that governments have made within them, notably to:

- Address significant gender gaps in labour force participation, wages, income pension, social protection and working conditions;
- Recognise that all women public services workers should be provided with decent work and just and favorable conditions of work, including living wages;
- Eliminate occupational segregation and promote the implementation of equal pay policies, including through social dialogue, collective bargaining and job evaluations,
- Work towards establishing or strengthening inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors, and ensure universal access to social protection;
- Ensure universal access to affordable quality essential, effective health-care services and medicines;
- Strengthen protections for workers in the informal economy and promote formalization;
- Ensure that unpaid care work is recognized and valued, including within contributory social security schemes;
- Guarantee access to paid maternity, paternity and parental leave and promote a shared responsibility of care between parents; and
- Adopt gender-responsive migration policies and the protect the rights of indigenous women and girls, women and girls of African descent, and women and girls with disabilities.
- Recognise the role of social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure in measures to eliminate, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls

Unions moreover welcome that the Agreed Conclusions recognise the importance of international labour standards and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, for which we stress the need for their respective ratification and effective implementation. It is also positive that the Agreed Conclusions acknowledge the contributions made by trade unions and civil society in representing and defending the interests of women, and the Conclusions stress the importance of their engagement in the implementation of the above measures.

Within the Agreed Conclusions, the Commission moreover acknowledges that progress in addressing gender gaps in social protection and public services risks being undermined by budget cuts and austerity measures and stresses the importance of not reversing the levels of protection previously achieved.

Unions nevertheless regret that the final conclusions fall short of reinforcing the State's responsibility in realizing women and girl's human rights. Worryingly, private sector actors were highlighted and assigned a legitimate role in "coordination", "consultation" and "engagement" in the provision of social protection, public services and infrastructure. Overall, no references to the potentially regressive and detrimental effects of privatization and public-private partnerships were made in case of a lack of transparency and proper procurement policies, and no accountability measures were outlined to ensure that profit does not come at the expense of women and girls' human rights.

The public nature of social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure was not addressed in any way in the Agreed Conclusions, nor was the need for systems, programs and services to be publicly funded, publicly delivered and managed. Systems, programs and services should also be publicly governed and made accountable to the public, in order to ensure good governance practices in the interests of women and girls in more vulnerable situations.

Global Unions hereby reiterate the primary responsibility of governments to implement the commitments outlined within the Agreed Conclusions for gender responsive and transformative social protection systems, quality public services and sustainable infrastructure, which will ensure women and girls enjoy the material basis to exercise their full human rights.