



Statement to the Anglican Consultative Council from the Anglican Communion Delegation to United Nations Commission for the Status of Women 59

“For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” Ephesians 2.10

Introduction

“After Beijing we chose to prioritise work which did not lead to irreversible, deep change. The work of real change still remains to be done.” Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women

The focus of this year's 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) was a 20-year anniversary review of the landmark [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), unanimously adopted by 189 countries at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women as an agenda for women's empowerment and a global policy document on gender equality. It set strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern. As a review year the aim of CSW59 was not to produce a set of Agreed Conclusions but to issue a Declaration at the start of the Commission then work towards [Agreed Working Methods](#) among the member states.

Following our two weeks of participation in CSW59, UN side events, parallel events organised by civil society, and deep conversations with other participants from diverse contexts, the 19 delegates from the Provinces of the Anglican Communion are pleased to present this statement and invitation to the Anglican Consultative Council and the wider Communion. We also give thanks to God for these two weeks lived as a microcosm of the whole Communion, sharing our experiences and working together in Christian community towards a common goal.

Major Issues

“No country shines when it comes to gender equality ... We still have work to do! ... Faith groups have a key role to play in changing negative social norms, stereotypes and behaviour.”

Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, Ecumenical Women Orientation Day

We have discerned that the major issues to emerge from this CSW are as follows:

1. Gender-based violence

“At last we have broken the silence on violence against women, now we must break the cycle.”

Agnes Leina, NGO CSW Consultation Day

One in three women worldwide is a victim of gender-based violence, according to UN Women statistics, and this includes child marriage, rape and domestic violence. Many women feel unable to speak out about their experiences, or feel unheard, because of legal and cultural constraints. We welcome men and boys who recognise the equal humanity of women and girls and encourage them to join us in eradicating gender-based violence, including changing harmful behaviours and attitudes. We acknowledge that alcohol and drug abuse may play a major role in violence, contributing to rather than causing violent behaviour.

Action: We call upon the Churches of the Anglican Communion to seize the opportunity to provide leadership on this issue through education, advocacy, and through modelling healthy relationships, that mercy, peace and love be for all people, in abundance (Jude 1.2).¹

2. Climate change

"The environment, after all, is where we all meet, where we all have mutual interest. It is one thing that all of us share." Dr Jane Goodall

God gave us the earth to care for, but we are now abusing what God has entrusted to our care. We recognise each person's and each country's responsibility for taking action to protect the environment. We are also conscious that empowering women leads to greater resilience in the face of climate impacts.

Action: We call on leaders throughout the Anglican Communion, working with the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, to raise the issues of environmental degradation and climate change throughout their churches and their communities, and to lobby their governments for action. We call specifically on the churches in high-polluting countries to press their governments for limits on emissions and for the transfer of technologies that enable sustainable development. We ask for resources to be put in place to educate women and men, girls and boys so that they can play their part in environmental sustainability, and for churches to listen to women's voices as they speak out on behalf of current and future generations. We call for women to be included in all aspects of climate planning.

3. Human trafficking and slavery

"The slavery industry today makes more money than the oil industry." Archbishop Sir David Moxon

As a delegation, we welcomed Archbishop Sir David Moxon's presentation on trafficking and modern slavery, which covered the issues and introduced the [Global Freedom Network](#), a faith-based joint initiative of the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking by 2020.

Action: We call on the Churches of the Anglican Communion as a whole to support this initiative and to work on raising awareness of the issues, pressing businesses and governments to address questions around supply chains and legislation, funding alternatives for vulnerable communities, and forming broad partnerships to offer care and support to victims.

4. Statelessness and birth registration

"Children not registered at birth are invisible. Fifty per cent of the world's children under five are unregistered." International Anglican Family Network

God created humanity and gave us identity and dignity, so that everyone might be respected and acknowledged. As Christians we understand the particular value of belonging to a community for our flourishing and empowerment. Conflict, wars, natural disaster, climate change displacement and discrimination result in the statelessness of millions around the globe. The lack of an official identity through statelessness or failure to register children at

¹ Cf ACC Resolution 15.07 on gender-based and domestic violence at www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-15/resolutions.aspx#s7

birth may result in denial of access to basic needs including education and health care, and many other benefits of citizenship.

Action: We call upon Anglican churches to assist families to overcome obstacles to registration and to raise awareness with the wider community of the importance of registered identity, making use of existing ministry opportunities such as baptism to inform and encourage parents and communities.

5. Gender equality with particular regard to education, economic participation, participation in decision-making, and health initiatives

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even if her shackles are not my own." Audre Lourde

As Christians we proclaim that God created men and women as human beings in God's image. Gender equality is a human right. It is incumbent upon governments and the Anglican Communion to legislate and implement laws, policies and programmes that enable gender equality. Special attention needs to be paid in regard to education, economic participation, participation in decision making and leadership, and women's health initiatives, it is essential to. Gender equality applies to all human beings and should be a discussion for all women and men, girls and boys.

Action: We call upon the Churches of the Anglican Communion to continue to lobby governments for the implementation of gender policies, programmes and laws.

We also bring to prominence the message of our sisters from the Nippon Sei Ko Kai on the risks of nuclear power plants in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster. Although four years have passed since the accident at the Fukushima power plants in 2011, people are still living in fear of radiation. We urge the Communion to hear the voices of these survivors on the risks of nuclear power and on the continuing crisis in Fukushima, and to keep them in our hearts and prayers.

Our Challenge to the Communion

"We cannot afford to take baby steps any longer. Now is the time for bold, giant steps."

Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka

CSW59 has issued a succinct challenge to the global community: Planet 50/50 by 2030, or in other words, full gender equality by 2030. We are, at our best, capable of bold, giant steps, and women of the world are demanding that now is the time for all of us to be at our best.

The Anglican Communion has already committed to this principle in the form of the fourth Mark of Mission: "to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation." We, the Anglican Communion delegation at CSW59, invite the whole Anglican Communion to 'step up' to the challenge of Planet 50/50 by 2030 and to take seriously the Church's mission to stimulate and support the social change required to achieve such a goal. This will require courage, prayer and deep discernment within our churches as we work to put our own house in order as well as urging the wider community to work to enable women and men everywhere to be recognised as equal in the eyes of God, and for the structures of church and society to reflect that equality in every aspect of life.

This means the full inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making and leadership in the Church, the careful stewardship of the earth's resources, and zero tolerance for violence in all its forms. Full inclusion requires that our churches continue to speak truth to power in regard to human trafficking and the economic and political policies that allow it to flourish. It means that our churches must continue to challenge discriminatory attitudes and practices that prevent women from accessing the healthcare they need. It means that churches use their connections with grassroots communities to educate local people about the importance of registering the births of all children, and advocate with governments which deny, revoke or fail to facilitate citizenship to their people.

These issues will present different challenges in different contexts, but the urgency is universal.

Hope for the Future

“I am about to do a new thing;
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert.” *Isaiah 43.19*

The review of progress in gender equality over the past 20 years indicates that while there have been major gains in the area of policy change and legislation, there is still much work to be done in implementing these changes. Yet we are called to be people of hope and resurrection. We believe that it is an essential part of the Church's mission that we promote the full human flourishing of all God's children, including God's daughters. It is in this belief that we turn hopefully toward the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council and pray that you will seize the opportunity that is before you to help create Planet 50/50 by 2030. We are confident that God will continue to bless us richly in this endeavour.

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Gillian Moses, Anglican Church of Australia

Tatiana Ribeiro, Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

Alice Medcof, Anglican Church of Canada

Margaret Kalilangwe, Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa

Mary Nirmala Thanja Peiris, Church of Ceylon

Maranda St John Nicolle, Church of England

Joan Grimm Fraser, The Episcopal Church

Sarah Chan Lau Sim, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

Makiko Fukuzawa, Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Japan)

Kei Ikezumi, Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Japan)

Tazu Sasamori, Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Japan)

Reem Fouad Najeeb El Far, Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East

Sar Kabaw Htoo, Church of the Province of Myanmar

Constance Mogina, Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea

Emily Alldritt, Scottish Episcopal Church

Louisa Mojela, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Dalcy Dlamini, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Evelyn Lamptey, Church of the Province of West Africa