



## Statement from the Anglican Communion delegation to the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

March 2014

### Women's Empowerment: A Gospel issue

The priority theme for the 2014 session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW58) was "Challenges and Achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for Women and Girls".

We are at a historic point in global development and understanding as we review the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), move toward the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (Beijing+20), and negotiate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2015 - 2030. Despite hard-won gains, women currently account for about two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people who live in extreme poverty. One in three women experience violence in their lifetime. Gender equality and women's rights are the essential precursors to meeting global challenges, which have disproportionate and burdensome impacts on women and girls. These include:

- poverty and hunger
- access to healthcare, especially neonatal and post natal care and non-communicable diseases
- climate change and environmental degradation
- the prevalence of sexual and gender based violence
- the need for universal birth registration.

Achieving gender equality requires equal access by women and girls to education, employment and income generating activities, health care, land and resources, as well as equal contribution to decision-making and peace-building processes and post-disaster responses. Long hours were spent negotiating the language of the agreement and focusing on the importance of a stand-alone goal for women and girls' equality. Without equality none of the MDGs or proposed SDGs will be accomplished.

The Anglican Communion Delegation therefore is truly pleased that the Agreement reached by the UN Commission on the Status of Women confirmed the need for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment in the set of international targets. The Agreement also stated that gender equality must underpin all other goals and includes strong language against violence against women and girls. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the executive director of UN Women, said the Commission's agreement to call for a stand-alone goal on gender equality represented "a milestone toward a transformative global development agenda that puts the empowerment of women and girls at its centre".

Cross-sector partnerships can speed up the pace of change. Faith-based organisations are increasingly perceived as key partners. The churches of the Anglican Communion have a vital part to play in exemplifying the transformation we long to see by transfiguring our communities and ending suffering. The gospel passage chosen by Anglicans leading morning worship in the UN Church Centre was from Luke 1 – Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and her great song of praise, empowerment and hope. Just as that was a time of enlightenment, so we trust that this Commission will lead to greater global understanding of women’s inequality and preparedness to speak out and for gender equity.

We thank the leadership of the Anglican Communion for the opportunity to join with 6000 women from around the globe and spend two weeks focused on the Status of Women. We are particularly grateful for the opportunity to meet and share with our Anglican sisters, as well as sisters from other Christian traditions, and other faiths. Uniting with women from very diverse contexts was an extraordinary learning experience that we will each take back to our communities.

We are sincerely grateful to Rachel Chardon for the support and assistance provided by the Anglican Communion Office at the UN; Beth Adamson whose generous facilitation ensured that we engaged fully with CSW and its opportunities for advocacy and learning; the staff of the Episcopal Church Center; the women of The Episcopal Church for their generous hospitality and Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori for the her warm welcome.

We return to our communities with new vision and renewed passion. When God is with us, “there is nothing we can’t do to heal, to save, to advocate, to transform.” (Deborah Rosenbloom, *Jewish Women International*)

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