

Statement from the Anglican Delegates at the 56th Session of the UNCSW

March 12, 2012

“The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges” was this year’s priority theme.

One quarter of the global population is rural women, one-half billion of whom are small holder farmers.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in his speech opening the UN International Women’s Day, stated that to empower rural women is to make a smart investment; women are an untapped natural resource. Yet women in agriculture receive only five percent of agricultural services, which as Mr. Ban said, “makes no sense”. As Marjon V. Kamara, CSW Bureau Chair, stated 92% of world hunger is due to poverty and women in agriculture are the key to reducing hunger and poverty.

After two weeks of attending UNCSW deliberations, parallel and side events and conversations with women across the globe, the 20 delegates from 16 countries from the Anglican Communion wish collectively to present our shared knowledge and expertise. We are agreed that the following are the most fundamental issues that need to be addressed for rural women to lead a dignified life:

- Access and availability to clean water and sanitation
- Food security
- Access to health facilities and affordable healthcare.

Forty billion hours are spent annually by women and girls fetching water. Access to water is the fundamental right from which life flows. Water is an incredibly important symbol for Christians, integral to our spirituality and Christian practice – and has been since the beginning of time when *‘the spirit of God swept over the face of the water’* (Genesis 1:2). Without water, life cannot be.

In order to achieve this year’s UNCSW priority theme, we are also agreed that rural women and girls need to be empowered through:

- Education: formal and informal, so as to attain the highest level of education they choose
- Entitlement to land ownership and inheritance rights
- Access to resources; financing (i.e. credit), markets for their products and access to transportation.

It must also be said that these issues affect not only rural women and girls in developing countries but also the rural poor and indigenous women and girls in developed countries.

We commend the ACC for resolutions 13/31 and 14/33 as tools that contribute to the empowerment of rural women.

We thank the Primates for the opportunity to come together this year in New York City. It has provided us the chance to share and learn from and with each other. We are committed to taking these learnings back to our own communities and act on them.

We urge the ACC to take strategic action at the global level.

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