

International Women's Day 2021

Joint NGO statement to UN Human Rights Council, 46th session

Delivered by Joy Onyesoh, WILPF President, during the HRC's Observance of International Women's Day. You can watch Joy's video statement using [this link](#), or going to WILPF [YouTube Channel](#)

It has been nearly one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

One year since the virus locked down the world – and revealed countless truths about the status of women and girls today.

It's 2021; instead of attaining equality, women and girls still represent the majority of people living in poverty. They are less likely to have access to healthcare and education, most affected by climate change and food insecurity, and most likely to experience gender-based violence. Women and girls facing multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination are at risk of being further marginalized and are particularly negatively affected. These include, but are not limited to, women and girls from minorities, Indigenous, migrant, refugee and rural communities, older women, women and girls with disabilities, and those living in conflict areas. Women are also more likely to face life-threatening risks as essential workers in the pandemic.

This must change. Governments and the multilateral institutions that claim to protect and advance human rights have to make that change.

This International Women's Day, we call on all of your governments to take immediate action on two of the most urgent threats facing women and girls in 2021 the deeply intertwined issues of economic injustice and environmental destruction.

Neoliberal economic policies have one rationale: the crass pursuit of financial gain at whatever cost.

The result is an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor; the denial of rights as people struggle to access healthcare, including COVID19 vaccines and sexual and reproductive health services, education, and community resources; and the destruction of natural resources – which, in turn, accelerates the impacts of climate change on the poorest individuals and communities.

Meanwhile, governments and private companies continue to invest billions of dollars each year into militarism and fossil fuels to protect and grow their economic interests – all at the expense of people and the planet.

Women are disproportionately affected by destructive economic and environmental practices and policies, yet government responses to socio economic crises generally do not take gender into consideration.

These governmental failures are unsurprising given that women are vastly underrepresented in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives: worldwide, just 24 per cent of all parliamentarians are women.

We demand that governments take immediate action to address the wide-ranging impacts of economic injustice and environmental destruction on women and girls, on humanity, and on our planet. And we demand that the Human Rights Council do its part.

Signatories

- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers-International (CFMW)
- Fondazione Pangea Onlus-REAMA network
- Franciscans International
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific)
- MenEngage Alliance
- Plan International
- RESPECT Network Europe
- Sexual Rights Initiative
- Transnational Migrant Platform-Europe (TMP-E)
- Women and Media Collective
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)