

Attachment 9

Draft political declaration To be discussed and adopted by IW Congress 2017

Accountability of governments on Women's Human Rights and gender equality. A new form of feminist activism to strengthen CSOs and feminist organisations

- Civil society's participation is currently under threat in many parts of the world. Legislative changes and restrictions in funding have undermined the independence of civil society actors and limited their capacity to function effectively.
- Shrinking civil society space should be seen as when space is closing for civil society to organize and foster civic engagement and when external support for democracy and human rights is shrinking.
- According to many studies, governments are seen to be the main offenders behind this oppression of civil society space, followed by business actors and extremists groups.

What are the reasons for this recent development?

- An international environment that is not conducive to the realization of human rights in particular concerning women's human rights.
- The post-1990's consolidation of hybrid regimes, the post 9/11 era and the spillover effect of counterterrorism agendas, as well as a global society with highly developed information and communication technologies, have also been contributing factors.
- We should work for the recognition of the critical and unequivocal role of women's and feminist organizations and women's human rights defenders. Without those, there would have been neither Beijing Declaration nor a program of action or progress in its implementation.
- We should advocate for a campaign to make governments understand that working with the civil society is the best way to rule a country.

What is the situation globally regarding progress on gender equality and women's human rights?

- The most recent UN Women Progress of the World's Women publication reported many advances in the status of women around the world. However, the results are very unevenly spread across countries. The political panorama is one of great turmoil. A variety of forms of backlash is threatening the progress made including increasing fundamentalism, violent extremism, increased number of refugees and displaced persons, increased inequalities within and between countries, climate change, etc...
- We have to work to ensure a real accountability for governments to address the structural causes of gender inequality as well as the emerging challenges that are setting back the fight for gender equality.

Why is shrinking space for civil society an important obstacle for the participation of CSOs and feminist organisations in accountability processes?

- Accountability means duty bearers (governments and others) are answerable to the people whose rights and lives are affected by their decisions.

- The independence of CSOs is a prerequisite for effective accountability of governments in the implementation of SDGs and women's human rights.
- Truly inclusive and democratic participation is a prerequisite for the operation of any meaningful accountability.

Through which mechanisms can women and feminist organizations participate in holding governments accountable on women's human rights?

- The most important mechanism is the one of the 2030 Development Agenda, the High-Level Political Forum, which was designated as the global apex of the follow-up and review process of the SDGs.
- The mandate of HLPF to review and hold states accountable is weak and limited especially because of its reliance on voluntary self-reporting. This mechanism needs strengthening.
- We should work to make the HLPF provide a counter-balance, an opportunity for engagement, and a place where government action can be subjected to scrutiny.
- Because of the weaknesses of the SDG's accountability architecture, it is crucial to seek other complementary pathways and tools of accountability. These offer opportunities for women rights' organizations to influence and inform policy-making and implementation in the long term and to identify systemic failures as well as good practices.
- UN mechanisms such as the Treaty Monitoring bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review could prove to be effective fora for monitoring progress on how far SDGs' implementation plans by states align with human rights in particular women's human rights.
- We should work to have the findings generated by human rights' mechanisms in particular the findings concerning women's human rights fed into the SDG specific review process.
- We should ask states to explain how their SDG's implementation plans are in line with their human rights obligations concerning women.

Conclusions

- Women's human rights' standards must be those on which public decisions are assessed.
- We should work for women to be full participants in any accountability processes.
- In conclusion, one crucial way of strengthening CSOs including women organisations is through their participation in accountability processes.

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September 2017