



Dr. Kellie Leitch, MP
Minister of Labour and Status of Women,
House of Commons Ottawa,
Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6

February 20, 2015

Dear Dr. Leitch,

The Institute for International Women's Rights – Manitoba (IIWR-MB) is looking forward to the upcoming meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is taking place at the United Nations in New York from March 9th till March 20th.

Based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, IIWR-MB is founded to generate education, awareness, and action to promote women's human rights. We have had an opportunity to review two very important documents that will form part of the meetings taking place at the CSW, The Political Declaration, and the Methods of Work, and think it is important to give you feedback, as it is the responsibility of Status of Women Canada to negotiate these documents on behalf of Canada.

In terms of feedback on the Declaration, we recommend using strong language supporting women's human rights. There must be consistent use of language supporting gender equality, empowerment and the human rights of all women and girls throughout the document. We would recommend including language around Indigenous women, especially the additional challenges they face over and above other women. Further, it is essential that the full reproductive rights for all women be stressed.

An organization in the UK has gone through the Working Methods document and we would like to support their comments that are attached here for your information. We support transparency in the discussion and decision making process, and that NGOs be given an opportunity to inform the debate.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Encl.
Mary Scott
Co chair, Institute for International Women's Rights - Manitoba

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Comments on the Working Methods Resolution edition dated 26 January 2015

UK NGO CSW Alliance Working Group January 29 2015

A – Norm-setting role of CSW

Para. 6 On follow-up, we would like to see specific recommendations on **mechanisms** for follow-up as well as the fact the outcomes of CSW should be widely disseminated.

Para 8. We strongly support this para stressing the need for emerging issues, trends and new approaches that require urgent consideration through an interactive format. At the moment forging a resolution is difficult, can only be done by governments and once passed seems never to be removed each year despite new international crises in which women are suffering disproportionately and differently from men, for example in conflict situations both between and within states; or, for example, as a result of global financial crises and particular economic policies adversely affecting women of all ages.

Para 9 – Emerging issues. We strongly support the need for an open process to identify emerging issues but seek the involvement of civil society in consideration of the topics. There are currently emerging issues identified from within stakeholder bodies – CSOs in particular - which may even be the topic of expert panels or major side events, but are not put on the CSW agenda – for example, the issue of widows; child and early marriage; torture by non-state actors.

Para 10. – So long as the process has included expertise from the wide range of stakeholders, we support the idea that the outcome of these discussions around emerging issues should take the form of a summary from the Chair of the Commission.

B - Commission's evaluation role to monitor implementation of the normative framework

Para 12 We are keen to see strong linkages to the post-2015 agenda and its follow-up.

(a) We support the involvement of stakeholders in national voluntary presentations. However, it is unclear which governments would volunteer this monitoring role nor is there any mechanism proposed to ensure consultation with non-governmental organisations, especially women's organisations.

C – The Commission’s catalytic role for gender mainstreaming

We support the work proposed on gender mainstreaming and to have CSW take up this role in support of the SDGs by contributing to their review and monitoring. We invite the insertion of a clause defining gender mainstreaming as being two-pronged with specific programmes and initiatives including the use of temporary special measures (CEDAW) to enhance women’s status and role, and to ensure a gender perspective is applied to all policy development and programme initiatives so that goals already agreed in CSW reviews and conclusions and in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are achieved. This would apply to the monitoring of the SDGs as well.

D – The Commission’s convening role to bring together stakeholders

We strongly support all the paragraphs and especially those devoted to the participation of NGOs: (para 19, 20 21) encouraging participation of NGOs and, indeed proposing to expand opportunities for NGOs (para 20) to speak and intervene during general discussion.

We would seek further strengthening of the role encouraging access to negotiations though we are concerned only a limited number of regionally diverse groups would be entitled to this. No selection process is indicated as yet here.

Para 22 – we support in particular the inclusion of NGOs with relevant expertise on official government delegations

Additionally

To strengthen the Commission and to focus attention on its **impact, the relative lack of press/media attention** and so forth that flow in part from the fact the Commission’s conclusions are not binding and in part from the fact urgent global problems for women of all ages and girls are not a focus nor easily addressed:

We are considering proposals being put in the NGO community globally to follow a pattern set by the Human Rights Council to set up a **task force** directly to work on the better functioning and impact of CSW and prepare an institution-building package. Such a task force would include an advisory board of NGOs – independent experts, academics, and grass roots representatives’ etc. so that the outcomes are **monitored**.

In relation to this proposal **A/RES/68/1para.s 22 and 23** contribute some basis although women are not mentioned. All the more reason for moving forward.