

Statement to mark International Women's Day 2018

In support of the Theme for International Women's Day (IWD) as set out by UN Women, "Time is Now: rural and urban activists transforming women's lives," the International Council of Women (ICW-CIF) reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working towards progress in ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women, in promoting gender equality in all spheres of life, and in achieving empowerment of women.

ICW-CIF applauds the Commission on the Status of Women for its outstanding effort to identify challenges and to create opportunities for promoting gender equality leading to the empowerment of women and girls.

Together with its affiliated national and regional Councils, the ICW-CIF calls for:

1. Public and private sectors to adopt policies and measures that increase the proportion of women in leadership positions in governments at all levels, on boards, in executive management positions, and in social and public institutions of civil society. Such leadership is essential to transform the socio-cultural traditions that hamper progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. All women, regardless of age, and particularly those from a rural, indigenous or migrant background, have the right to enjoy the same opportunities as their male counterparts in obtaining the quality education and training that equips them with the technical skills necessary to improve productivity, to secure employment, and to be successful in a vocation.
3. Equal pay for equal work, and recognition of the value of unpaid household and care work. It is a well-established fact that increasing the number of women in the workforce leads to higher economic productivity and growth at the community, national, and regional levels. Women should be paid fairly for their contribution.
4. Equal access of women and girls to quality health care, productive resources, and social protection compared to men. The creation of essential institutions, such as child care centers, and policies which do not discriminate on the basis of gender

can help to alleviate the excessive unpaid care and household burdens borne by women.

5. Governments to establish policies and measures that eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, human and sex-trafficking, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

6. Collaboration of governments, civil society, and the media to raise awareness of the plight and challenges facing women and girls. Working together, the likelihood of success in movement toward gender equality and empowerment is far greater than working in isolation.

We strongly urge all governments to adopt legislation, policies and measures, supported by appropriate budget allocation, to make a firm commitment to accelerate progress towards women's economic empowerment and gender equality. This will certainly stimulate higher economic growth, assist in the movement toward sustainable development, and contribute in meaningful ways to true peace in the world.