

CONCEPT NOTE OF THE “GENDER EQUALITY AND RELIGION PLATFORM” FOR THE GENDER RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT / CSW 61

There is growing recognition in the international development community of the fact that religions can be critical moral, social and political agents of human development and that religious actors play a bigger role than initially acknowledged.

This makes it imperative for us to consider how such efforts can further enhance and guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With a common call ‘to leave no one behind’, to ‘reach the furthest behind first’, and to ‘address inequalities’, faith actors have an equal stake in contributing to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development provides all stakeholders including faith actors a guiding map to continue making their contribution to human wellbeing and the protection of the planet. The 2030 Agenda is of unprecedented scope and significance, accepted by all and applicable to all. Its universal nature makes it unique with 17 goals that are indivisible and interconnected.

The 2030 Agenda declares that regardless of gender access to justice and everyone’s human rights matter. Women and girls constitute half of humanity, and their needs and potential cannot and must not be ignored. It recognizes gender equality and women’s empowerment as “a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets” and requires the integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of the implementation of the entire agenda.

While SDG 5 is particularly significant, it is not the only priority; gender-responsive implementation of the agenda entails working across all SDGs. In contrast to only 5 targets pertaining to gender issues under the MDGs, there are 40 SDG targets (25%) that are explicitly or implicitly related to gender equality.

A distinct feature of the 60th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) was its recognition for the first time of the role of faith-based organizations for addressing the needs of all women and girls especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization, for movement building, and for transforming social norms.

With this in mind, the members of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) led by UN Women on behalf of the UN’s Interagency Task Force for Religion and Development (UNFPA/UNIATF), UKAid/DFID and the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), decided to create a platform entitled “Gender Equality and Religion for the Gender Responsive Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. This platform will invite religious leaders, representatives of intergovernmental, governmental, faith based organizations, civil society organizations, theologians, academics, development and gender equality experts; with the goal of advocating for and identifying strategies for the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development from both a faith and gender equality lens. The platform will explore how the various SDGs can be simultaneously approached from both a faith and gender perspective for the best possible and most effective way for implementation.

The envisaged platform is a collective effort, building on existing initiatives and engagements, to strengthen the voice, representations and specific interests of women and men of faith committed to gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment as a means towards realizing the SDGs. As such, the platform will strengthen a coherent voice, and approach to gender equality and sustainable development as an expression and vision of faith.

THE VISION FOR THE GENDER EQUALITY AND RELIGION PLATFORM

- The platform will function as a network composed of PaRD members' respective tried and tested UN partners from various spheres, regions and religions. This network will be a global resource for religious and non-religious organizations and movements working towards gender equality to draw upon for advocacy purposes, consultations, thematic expertise and development initiatives, unpacking the interlinkages between gender equality, religion and sustainable development.
- To guide the work of this network, an Advisory Group will be established composed of prominent men and women of faith selected from the platform and by members of the platform; in order to guarantee a participatory and inclusive process as well as to build on the ownership of this platform by its members.
- Members of the Advisory Group will possess both thematic expertise as well as a deep understanding of policy development, in addition to possessing experience in working to effect attitudinal and policy changes within their respective communities
- This group should be regularly reconfigured so that its membership changes on a regular basis to be determined by PaRD and Platform members jointly.
- All members of the platform would be nominated according to PaRD criteria which are in line with UN criteria (used in previous engagements with faith actors and partners) and which the group would elaborate and finalize together for this purpose. This includes a balanced and diverse representation of religious and regional affiliation in the Platform itself and in the Advisory Group as well as a high level of legitimacy and experience in working with and within FBOs that are legal registered entities.

Note: Methods of work of the Platform will be further discussed during the launch of this initiative (see below). Terms of Reference will be drafted, and finalized in consultation with all members of the Platform and adopted at the constituting meeting of the Platform.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE GENDER EQUALITY AND RELIGION PLATFORM

- To provide a means of exchanging experiences and sharing knowledge.
- To help mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in all of PaRD's work streams, for instance PVE or Health.
- To foster dialogue between religious and non-religious actors working towards gender equality and the SDGs in general.
- To function as a resource for conferences, campaigns, events and expertise for all actors involved in the implementation of the SDGs.
- To strengthen advocacy for gender equality and women and girls' empowerment as a means towards realizing the SDGs.



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LAUNCH OF THE INITIATIVE

CSW 61 represents a strategic symbolic and powerful venue to facilitate and strengthen the role and contribution of these constituencies in the gender responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and across its SDGs.

By creating the opportunity for an open, deep and intersectional conversation among faith and non-faith actors, bilateral as well as multilateral policy makers on the importance of reaching coherence between religion, gender equality and sustainable development- the event will facilitate the creation of a common, transformative, cultural and social framing for gender equality.

The Launch of this platform will take place on 15 March 2017, at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations; with the participation of high level officials from various member states and a panel discussion bringing experts together for an in-depth discussion on the value, role, and workings of this platform.

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

- To initiate the launch of the platform: The event will present the opportunity to inform the international community, faith based partners and other of this initiative which is a direct response to the agreed conclusion of the CSW60.
- To present the modalities and value of the platform to a broader audience.
- To advocate and garner political support for cross cutting partnerships between faith, gender equality, and development actors, policy makers and the UN System;
- To highlight the value in exchanging lessons learnt between faith actors as well as non-faith actors, who have extensive experience on the ground and between gender equality advocate under the framework of sustainable development. This is crucial as the platform can show how religion can guide good practices in pursuing development strategies underpinned by both a rights based approach and a faith based approach.

ORGANIZERS AND CO-SPONSORS

UN Women on behalf of the UN's Interagency Task Force for Religion and Development (UNIATF), together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UKAid/DFID and the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).