Statement by the Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the United Nations on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), 61ST Session of the Commission on the Status of Women “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”

GENERAL DISCUSSION

New York, 13th March 2017
Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States welcomes the priority theme of this year’s session “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”, and the review theme “Challenges and achievement in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls”, and is grateful for the reports presented by the Secretary General, as well as the recommendations contained therein.

We reiterate the importance of the full, accelerated and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of its review conferences, as well as of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. We also reaffirm the importance for States Parties to fully comply with their international obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol.

Our member States recognize the importance of the Special Declaration “On the promotion of gender equality and equity and eradication of violence against women”, the CELAC Action Plan and the CELAC Political Declaration of Punta Cana approved on the occasion of the Fifth Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held on January 25 2017.

We reaffirm the commitments previously adopted by our States in international and regional conventions, pacts and agreements on the human rights of women, gender equality, sustainable development for the physical autonomy and with regard to the decision making and economic empowerment of all women and girls, especially those who suffer multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Also we reaffirm our commitment to promote gender equity and equality, as well as the advancement of women, as necessary conditions to achieve full realization and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to achieve the goals and targets for Sustainable Development of the 2030 Agenda.
For CELAC, the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women must be a priority objective for our countries and the United Nations, in accordance with its purposes and principles. We reaffirm that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and that their full and equal enjoyment by women and girls is essential for their economic empowerment.

In this regard, representatives from our region met in Panama City from 6 to 8 February 2017 for the regional consultations of Latin America and the Caribbean jointly convened with UN Women, in order to contribute the preparations for this Session of the Commission. A number of high-level officials participated in the fruitful discussions and adopted the Panama Declaration, which reflects the important perspectives that will contribute to our continued efforts to ensure the economic empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairman,

We know that much progress has been made by the international community since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; nevertheless, we should keep in mind how far we still are from reaching all those goals and commitments, particularly with regard to equality between women and men.

In a context where Latin America and the Caribbean is a heterogeneous region, with an enormous richness and diversity but with significant differences, both between and within countries. At the same time, our region faces a number of difficulties and challenges but also shares common features, which allow it to face problems together and work towards overcoming these challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

The status of women is a matter of continued concern to our societies particularly because of the presence of structural obstacles like the feminization of poverty, violence against women, including femicide, domestic violence, sexual abuse and trafficking, discrimination in women’s access to education and training, unequal access to economic and financial resources, unequal access to and use of basic healthcare resources,
inequalities in employment policies including the unequal distribution of unpaid work, such as care and domestic work for children, older persons, and persons suffering from diseases both communicable and non-communicable and trafficking in women and girls, which has created a disproportionate burden for women, as well as structural inequalities that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, marginalization and inequality.

It is necessary to achieve the full realization of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to development. Gender equality, the empowerment of women, women’s full enjoyment of all human rights and the eradication of poverty are essential to economic and social development, including the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this regard, we reaffirm the importance of ensuring the promotion and protection of women’s economic rights, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, addressing its economic, social and political structural causes, and guaranteeing equal access for women of all ages, as drivers of sustainable development, to labor opportunities and economic and productive resources, support services, and participation in decision-making processes, including in the areas of food housing and education, opportunities and public services particularly healthcare services.

CELAC also reiterates the importance of enhancing and strengthening women’s equal access to lifelong learning opportunities and equal access to high quality education, training and skills development at all levels, including early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education, and the access to health care services, in particular maternal health and sexual and reproductive health and to decent productive employment, including through the elimination of barriers to equal conditions for women and men in the workplace and equal pay for equal work, to social protection, as well as autonomy and economic empowerment.

Mr. Chairman,

We attach particular importance to promoting macroeconomic policies with a gender perspective that enable the creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and
innovation, foster the investment in social care infrastructure and stimulate the expansion of economic activity to promote the full employment of women, recognizing women’s contribution as a part of unpaid care and domestic work, without segregation or discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity and race. It is also important to ensure that trade and investment policies meet international human rights standards.

We express our commitment to implement, with the assistance of relevant stakeholders, measures and embark upon campaigns to dismantle patriarchal cultural stereotypes that perpetuate the unequal division of labor solely on the basis of sex, and other discriminatory social and economic norms that hinder, devalue or make invisible the work of women. We further commit to the implementation of policies and programs aimed at promoting access to decent work for women, in particular for those facing multiple and intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination with special attention given to young women, indigenous women, women of African descent, rural women, migrant women, older women, women with disabilities and women living with HIV.

Our member States recognize the importance of including, in development and poverty eradication policies, strategies and programs, the strengthening of the economic activities of rural and indigenous women and their organizations, with participatory consultation and negotiation mechanisms, that enable free and informed consent, that respect and protect their traditional and ancestral knowledge, in order to enhance their empowerment, autonomy and development so that they have better mechanism that ensure the reproduction of life and conservation of the land, the territory and the environment.

Furthermore, our countries highlight the importance of eradicating all forms of violence against women, in particular domestic violence as well as harassment at workplace, which have a negative impact on their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and constitute an impediment to the empowerment of women, in particular, in the economic scope.

Also, we emphasize the importance of promoting a socially responsible and accountable private sector that acts in line with, among others, the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework and the Global Compact, in order to achieve gender equality and the
empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom.

We reiterate the important role of men and boys as key agents of change for achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls in our societies, and we encourage them to take an active part in, and to engage fully as agents and beneficiaries of change especially in the realization of women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Also, we commit to promoting the empowerment of all women and girls throughout their entire life cycle, and break down the barriers that impede economic integration, in an effort to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals set out in the 2030 Agenda, through education, training and skills development; universal access to quality healthcare and equal pay for equal work, equitable redistribution of domestic work; access to banking and financial services, capital and assets; access to markets; entrepreneurship in specialized sectors and the strengthening of business ties; the full insertion and re-insertion in the current technological revolution; and increase the active participation of women of all ages in political, economic and public life in order to engender parity and the creation of networks in leadership roles.

We propose that Governments should examine and seek to pursue the creation of legal, administrative and policy measures necessary for the development and establishment of systems to ensure universal access to non-contributory retirement and disability pensions, and special schemes for self-employed women that allow their formalization.

Mr. Chairman,

CELAC recognizes the vulnerability and situation of women who suffer multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant, rural and indigenous women, women with disabilities, older women and women of African descent. Our countries agreed to intensify efforts to develop the full potential of women and girls in the world of work and address violence and discrimination against them who besides being discriminated against for being women, also face discrimination as a result of additional factors, such as race, age, language, ethnic origin, culture, religion and disabilities, among others.
According to the Secretary-General's report, over the past 25 years, the number of international migrants has grown considerably, there has been a notable feminization of migration. Globally, migrant women have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrant women, and are concentrated in female-dominated care and service sectors in the informal economy, since most cannot access formal labour markets. Poor working conditions in the informal economy are exacerbated by labour discrimination, sexism, racism and xenophobia.

In this regard, CELAC Member States attach particular importance to the protection of migrant women and girls. The contribution of migrants, in particular, migrant women workers, not only to sustainable development but also to the economic growth of countries of origin, transit and destination. The human rights of migrant women must be fully respected regardless of their migratory status.

Likewise, in the juncture of 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we must recognize the critical role and contribution of indigenous women and their traditional knowledge, in enhancing agricultural development, improving food security and eradication of rural poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

Our countries reaffirm the importance of strengthening statistical information systems to ensure the generation of gender statistics and the adaptation of mechanisms, tools and indicators to enable the collection, production, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, race, nationality at birth, migratory status, disability, income groups, sector, occupation, geographical location, and other characteristics relevant to the national contexts. We further support, the incorporation of information on both formal and informal work.

CELAC also advocates for more international dialogue and consensus, as well as enhanced international cooperation, including regional, North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, in support of national initiatives in developing countries designed to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.
CELAC Member States renew their strong support to the mandate of UN Women.

We recognize the women’s economic empowerment and the realization of women’s rights to and at work are essential for the achievement of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to leave no one behind.

To conclude Mr. Chairman,

The governments of the region maintain their firm commitment to promoting equity, equality and the empowerment of women, as it was agreed in the CELAC ACTION PLAN, which was approved by our Heads of State and Government in the V CELAC Summit, held in Punta Cana, on January 2017.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,