



# COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN REVITALIZATION

## Women's Rights Caucus Priorities

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With a membership of over 500 intergenerational and diverse feminist activists and organizations, the Women's Rights Caucus (WRC)<sup>1</sup> has a deep understanding and extensive experience of the activities, modalities, outcomes, and history of the Commission on the Status of Women. Following consultation with WRC members in late 2024, and building on the recommendations from other civil society actors, the WRC has developed a set of key priorities and specific proposals to center in the CSW revitalization discussion.

<sup>1</sup> The Women's Rights Caucus (WRC) is a global intersectional feminist coalition of more than 400 organizations, networks, and individuals convened by Fòs Feminista, APWLD, FEMNET, Outright International, and the Young Feminist Caucus

**1. Our feminist vision for CSW is a vision of accountability** through strengthening the **political will** of the CSW beyond a tool for policy recommendations and towards a transformative space that drives meaningful change across systems, accountability from Member States (MS), and robust and dynamic year-round modalities. We call for clear, measurable, actionable, and comprehensive outcomes and follow-up through ambitious Agreed Conclusions (ACs) grounded in a renewed commitment to **bridge the CSW accountability gap** between the commitments made and follow-up at the country level. We must **set the CSW Revitalization process in a wider conversation about UN reform** that recognizes that the CSW is experiencing and must address the challenges seen across the UN, including weakened multilateralism, lack of resourcing, the impact of UN liquidity and budgeting crises, the corporate capture of the UN and over-emphasis on the private sector as key stakeholders, and the influence of anti-rights and anti-gender actors. Accountability must include **synergizing the links between CSW and other UN mechanisms and bodies** including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and other mechanisms, to ensure the integration of gender equality across the UN and support for mainstreaming a gender perspective and a human rights-based approach in UN activities.

### **WE CALL ON CSW TO:**

- **Take inspiration from best practices in other UN processes** such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), and UPR, and embed practices that will improve accountability such as: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) access to negotiations as observers, shadow reporting mechanisms for civil society, informal advisory bodies, formal engagement opportunities and mechanisms with MS, CSO engagement through mechanisms such as the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS), Temporary Special Measures, CSO participation in expert panels, ministerial dialogues, and high-level segments, and ensuring that all participants have equal opportunities to contribute, regardless of whether they are present or not, such as in the Human Rights Council (HRC);
- **Decentralize engagement within CSW** by strengthening regional and national level consultation processes, intentionally integrating sub-regional and regional processes, and creating safe, transparent, and accountable space and scope for civil society to contribute and add value and richness to the CSW outcomes, and commit to the resourcing of these consultations in the global South by global North MS;
- **Ensure annual regional CSW consultations** that are transparent and accessible and that document insights and recommendations that inform CSW themes, dialogue, priorities, and outcomes, and strengthen cross-regional exchange, solidarity, and learning, with ongoing follow-up, addressing the unique intersectional barriers faced at local, subregional, and regional level;
- **Standardize annual national CSW** consultations that are inclusive and accessible to diverse groups, ensuring the safety and security of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), and ensuring outcomes are central to the regional consultations and CSW;
- **Negotiations of the ACs must be grounded in the principles of transparency and participation**, where civil society can participate with representation as official observers, support MS through ample and timely opportunity and space for engagement and interaction between MS and civil society around the AC drafts, and engaging civil society with a designated number of funded spaces to support the group of experts and bureau in the drafting and negotiation process who can also act as a bridge with civil society;
- **Require MS to share reflections on the actions taken so far** on commitments made in the previous year's ACs, including financial and budgetary commitments made, with reports made publically available and with space during the CSW for questions from other MS, and official space for reflection, response, and comments from civil society at CSW and regional consultations;

- **Ensure more robust accountability mechanisms** to track longer-term country-level progress on gender equality and commitments made at CSW, for example, VNR style or UPR style reporting on how ACs of the past five years have been followed up on through national-level legislation/policy/ budgetary measures, sharing progress on the implementation of BPfA, with engagement and shadow reporting opportunities for civil society in that process, including a requirement of MS to reflect on how they have engaged with civil society in the implementation of the commitments made;
- **Ensure that engagement in and follow-up from the CSW** is held with the most appropriate and relevant ministry at the capital level, and includes engagement with other relevant ministries;
- **The Ministerial Segment and Ministerial Round Tables** must be more interactive, ensuring the inclusion of more dynamic formats, small group discussions, breakout sessions, and participatory workshops, with participation opened up to representatives from civil society;
- **Establish rotating regional hosting** that ensures the CSW prioritizes hosting in the global South and continues to be political, ambitious, and forward-looking, and that includes a formal mechanism for civil society participation that upholds the rights, security, and safety of all, particularly marginalized and structurally excluded groups and is inclusive, participatory, accessible, and transparent;
- **The Chair's summaries** should include more specific policy initiatives or recommendations for action based on the emerging issues highlighted;
- **Strengthen the work of UN Women** with support from MS and the UN system including increased resourcing to support country-level work, national CSW consultation processes that are more inclusive, participatory and that engage diverse communities, and strengthen their role in ensuring follow-up to and awareness-raising of the outcomes of CSW and accountability by Member States in their commitments to gender equality and the BPfA, and their work with other UN entities to ensure gender equality is amplified across the UN system;
- **At this milestone of Beijing+30**, Member States must recommit to the CSW's **role in monitoring and reviewing the progress of the BPfA** and its significance not just as a historical reference but as an active framework with a renewed commitment to and greater emphasis on implementation, resourcing, ambition, and actionability as a priority.

**2. Our feminist vision for CSW is a vision of feminist leadership and civil society participation** through making CSW an accessible, safe, and inclusive space for diverse women and girls to engage in policy discussions and shape outcomes without structural barriers to their participation, and with Women Human Rights Defenders' full and free participation without the threat of retribution. **Bolster Civil Society participation and leadership** with more established ways of engaging, taking examples from CEDAW and the UPR where more adequate systems and structures for civil society participation exist, ensuring that the CSW mandates from a concept of equality and accountability. We call for **increased engagement opportunities and interaction between CSOs and Member States**, for the recognition of the fundamental contribution that CSOs and feminist engagement and expertise make to CSW, and to ensure that CSW is paving the way for the transformation of CSO engagement in UN processes. **Platform the voices and reflections from civil society** that go beyond consultation and that actively inform policy discussion, ensuring that CSW addresses the unique challenges and integrates more inclusive leadership structures that prioritize youth, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and other systematically excluded and marginalized voices.

## WE CALL ON CSW TO:

- **Significantly expand the space and time allocated for civil society engagement,** statements, and interaction at CSW, and prioritize the participation of structurally excluded and marginalized community representatives in official and ministerial spaces at all levels;
- **Address the lack of interactive opportunities in the hybrid model** for CSW participation through strengthened platforms, technology subsidies and grants for access, scheduling across timezones, real-time technical support, real-time captioning, and sign language interpretation;
- **Side events should be better resourced by governments** and supported to take place within and outside the official programme, and made more accessible to those unable to attend in person. MS can make better use of the discussion, resources, narratives, and insights shared through side events that offer valuable evidence for the CSW;
- **Increased support for visa acquisition** by civil society for participation in CSW global and regional processes, in particular addressing the visa restrictions for participants from the global South, by ensuring the host country grant visas process is more streamlined, accessible, and expedited;
- **Revisit the ECOSOC accreditation process** that structurally and systemically excludes many, in particular marginalized communities and women, girls, and gender-diverse people from the global South. Simplify and speed up the procedures, and provide options and pathways for participation without ECOSOC status, such as the non-ECOSOC participation seen in recent regional spaces, and support the participation of autonomous collectives, movements, and partnerships;
- **Intentionally and urgently work on the safety and security of WHRDs,** and provide a protected system through which complaints may be reported, immediate actions taken to offer support, drawing from other processes like the security measures of the UPR, and support marginalized communities targeted by systems of authoritarianism, fundamentalism, fascism, and militarization;
- **Increase financial support by the UN and MS** for participation by civil society, including travel grants, digital participation support, disability and language accessibility, and interpretation;
- **MS Delegations must go beyond the current quotas** for inclusion and understanding of who is an ‘expert’, and ensure a broad and diverse range of stakeholders including young people and feminist activists;
- **Structured and official mechanisms** and resources to **support the engagement of young people in CSW,** such as scholarships and funding for travel to CSW, supporting the Young Feminist Caucus to coordinate young women’s engagement at CSW, and formalizing roles for young feminists and structurally excluded groups in official spaces at the regional consultations and CSW;
- **Make the expert group consultations more inclusive and broaden the description of expertise** to include the lived experience of marginalized groups such as women in rural communities, Indigenous women, women who live with disabilities, women impacted by statelessness and gender-discriminatory nationality laws, LGBTIQ, and young people;

- **The CSW must utilize accessibility best practices** such as the **Feminist accessibility protocol**<sup>2</sup> and ensure strengthened processes and mechanisms that ensure disability justice and accessibility such as plain language summaries, visual aids, and videos with clear, concise explanations, sensory-friendly materials, flexibility in participation options, provide information in accessible formats, and address barriers for people to navigate the UN HQ spaces who may have mobility restriction.

**3. Our feminist vision is a CSW that responds to urgent and emerging issues and crises** and incorporates more flexibility and transparency into the agenda-setting process, allowing the CSW to **react quickly to emerging crises**, to not only keep CSW accountable to its mandate but also relevant and responsive to the multiple crises we face globally.

#### **WE CALL ON CSW TO:**

- **Ensure the thematic focus of each annual CSW** is determined through a collaborative and transparent process that reflects current global challenges and emerging issues affecting women with more regular revisiting of priority themes. NGOs, researchers, women's rights organizations, and feminist activists should be on the panel of experts developing the priority themes;
- **The CSW must address deeply entrenched structural issues and historical injustices**, such as imperialism, militarization, neo-liberal and capitalist development models, debt, and environmental degradation;
- **Resist the global trends of anti-rights and pushback** on the critical areas of concern of the BPfA that are negatively influencing and impacting for example SRHR, abortion rights, climate change, and women's and girls' human rights;
- **CSW priority themes must address the intersections of women and girls' lived realities and experiences** and must expand, not silo, the mandate and implementation of the BPfA. Whilst GBV is crucial, it is not the key and main root cause of inequalities and discrimination against women and girls. Commitment from CSW to addressing GBV must also be grounded in the rights of trans people and the recognition of sex worker rights.
- **The CSW has a critical role** in highlighting the intersections of **gender justice and disability justice** with a strengthened, more cohesive, and inclusive framework. statements, and interaction at CSW, and prioritize the participation of structurally excluded and marginalized community representatives in official and ministerial spaces at all levels.

For more information please contact the WRC co-conveners (Fòs Feminista, APWLD, FEMNET, Outright International, and the Young Feminist Caucus) via Andrea Vega Troncoso [AVega@fosfeminista.org](mailto:AVega@fosfeminista.org)

<sup>2</sup> *The Feminist Accessibility Protocol is a groundbreaking set of commitments that seek to ensure the inclusion of feminists with disabilities in gender equality spaces.*