

Women's Major Group Intervention
Presented by Shannon Kowalski
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Thank you, my name is Shannon Kowalski from the International Women's Health Coalition and I am speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group.

We would like to reinforce the comments from many member states, which have emphasized the centrality of human rights for the SDGs. Poverty is a consequence of systematic violations of human rights. To ensure that efforts related to the SDGs do not reinforce or exacerbate inequalities, discrimination and other rights violations that lead to exclusion, marginalization and poverty, the SDGs must be grounded in the protection and promotion of the human rights of all, with specific attention to the human rights of women and girls. The full, effective participation of women, persons with disabilities and others who are marginalized in the design and implementation of the SDGs is essential.

As the representative of Ireland (speaking on behalf of Norway and Denmark) said, the majority of the world's poor are women. Because of this it is important that poverty eradication efforts address the structural drivers that lead to the feminization of poverty. Linked to this, is the need to fairly redistribute wealth, assets and power among social groups, but especially between men and women. We offer a few recommendations that can help address the structural causes of poverty, and also address the institutionalized discrimination and asymmetric power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequalities and the feminization of poverty:

- Firstly, and importantly, we need to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights *and universal access to quality, comprehensive, integrate sexual and reproductive health services to women and girls*. Lets be clear; without the ability to control all aspects of their sexuality and decide the number and spacing of their children, women simply cannot participate equally in education, employment or political, cultural or social life.
- Secondly, women's rights to and control over land, property, intellectual and productive resources, information and technology needs to be assured, and fair asset distribution among different social groups and between women and men must be promoted. Both are essential for lifting women out of poverty and ensuring they have the resources they and their families need to survive and thrive.
- At the same time we need to halt practices such as landgrabbing, the massive expansion of extractive industries and large-scale monocultures and other economic activities which affect the health of people and the environment, destroy small women farmers and fishers livelihoods, and push women into poverty.

- Instead, we need to strengthen local and regional sustainable agriculture structures and policies which can provide economic and livelihood opportunities at a community level and link rural and urban communities, as well as promotes food sovereignty - and access to nutritious, toxin-free food that addresses the issue of hunger.
- We need to guarantee women's economic rights including by ensuring that women have equal access to decent work, which requires legal protections for women workers, maternity and sick leave, and a living wage;
- States should guarantee universal access to public care services and ensure quality and decent working conditions for care providers. This will contribute to a fair redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

We have heard comments on conflict, peace and security, but few mentions of the intersection of poverty and violence against women (VAW), which is a structural driver of the feminization of poverty and a major contributor to intergenerational poverty for women. VAW was identified as the #1 priority in the e-discussion on Gender Equality that was held as part of the UN post 2015 Global Thematic Discussion on Inequalities. And the recent outcome at the 57th UN Commission on the Status of Women underscored that ending VAW is key to eradicating poverty and achievement of inclusive sustainable development.

Finally we **note** that climate change is one of the greatest threats to poverty eradication and sustainable development, adding a fairly new dimension. Climate change has a devastating effect on women, their families and communities and their ability to move out of poverty, which should be acknowledged in a new framework.

Thank you.