

Statement of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the rights of rural women

Adopted on 4 March 2016 during its sixty-third session

Observance of International Women's Day 2016 will be used as an opportunity for building momentum for the effective implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many of which reflect on the situation of rural women. In celebrating this day, the CEDAW Committee calls for a focus on rural women and girls and the need to promote and protect their rights in accordance with Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The CEDAW Committee is therefore pleased to announce the adoption of a General Recommendation No.34 on the Rights of Rural Women, which coincides with International Women's Day 2016.

A quarter of the world's population are rural women. Several UN Conferences recognised their significant contributions to rural development, food and nutrition, as well as poverty reduction. Nevertheless, they continue to face challenges including systemic and persistent barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights. In many countries, their specific needs are not adequately addressed in laws, national and local policies and budgets. They remain excluded from leadership and decision-making positions at all levels, are disproportionately affected by negative stereotypes, gender-based violence and insufficient access to basic social services and resources.

In light of the particular situation of rural women and girls, the Committee urges the international community, including Governments to ensure through their empowerment, inter alia:

- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against rural women focusing on the particular needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups;
- Adoption of non-discriminatory legal frameworks and easy and affordable access of rural women to justice;
- Adoption of relevant policies and institutional structures for the full development and advancement of rural women;
- Creation of an enabling environment through temporary special measures, including programmes and policies targeted at improving the social and economic conditions of rural women;
- Elimination of negative stereotypes and harmful customs and practices including child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and discriminatory and customary laws on inheritance;
- Prevention of all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, trafficking and forced labour;
- Meaningful participation in political and public life at all levels;
- Access to quality and affordable education, healthcare services and facilities, employment opportunities, adequate housing, safe drinking water and sanitation, access to land and credit, new technologies including ITC;
- Protection of rural women from the negative consequences of acquisition of land by national and transnational companies and/or foreign countries, as well as due to extractive industries and megaprojects; and
- Protection and security of rural women and girls in the overall context of increased disasters linked to climate change, as well as other crises, including man-made disasters.

The Committee reiterates that addressing the situation of rural women will contribute to the development of societies, the strengthening of norms and standards of human rights, as well as the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon by the international community.