

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2012  
STATEMENT DELIVERED BY SISTER ADVOCATE

Distinguished Chairperson and delegates, I speak here on behalf of a broad union coalition: ITUC, PSI and EI (as well IUF) who together represent 70 million women workers world-wide, of whom 7 million are rural women workers. The economic empowerment of rural women workers, and adequate living conditions and access to basic services for rural women, have the longest working day, despite being constrained by lack of access to productive resources, public goods and services, markets and land tenure rights needed to reach their productive potential. According to the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), rural poverty is deeply rooted in the imbalance between what women do and what they have.

A Majority of rural women workers are in the agriculture industry, yet public investment in agriculture is only 5 percent. Aside from their lack of capital, these rural women workers are too frequently deprived of basic human rights, including the right to freedom of association; the right to bargain collectively for better working conditions; the right to live and work free from violence; the right to medical care and necessary social services; the human right to 'spiritual protection' and the right to an adequate standard of living. Chair, this situation is simply too long.

Poor Occupational Health and Safety standards also remain a major concern with women paying for these standards with their health and sometimes their lives.

We, as trade unions, together with women working in rural areas, emphasise the need for decent work including access to social protection, public services, sports, health, clean water, sanitation, energy and quality education.

The global trade union movement calls on Member States at the 100<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

- i. Ensure that the concept of 'decent work' and the creation of decent jobs are fully incorporated into rural development strategies and programmes, and rural labour inspection;
- ii. Invest in building the necessary social infrastructure, including health, education, social care, water, sanitation, energy, transportation and other social protection mechanisms, in order to ensure sustainable economic and social development in rural areas;
- iii. Review, extend and effectively implement national legislation that covers all rural women workers, including agricultural workers, and ratify, ratify and implement ILO conventions;
- iv. Ensure that gender-responsive budgeting, gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive employment policies are systematically integrated in the design and the implementation of rural development policies and programmes.

Distinguished Chairperson and delegates, I speak on behalf of our trade union coalition: ITUC, PSI and EI (as well IUF) who together represent 70 million women workers world-wide, of whom 7 million are women workers. The economic empowerment of rural women workers requires adequate policies and action. Like millions of rural women have the longest working day - despite being constrained by lack of access to productive resources, public goods and services, markets and land tenure rights needed to reach their productive potential. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), rural poverty is deeply rooted in the imbalance between what women do and what they have.

A Majority of rural women workers are in the agriculture industry, yet public investment agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa constitutes only 4 percent. Aside from their lack of capital, these rural women workers are

**Thank you very much.**

- v. Ensure the provision of public quality education for all children and young people, adequate facilities, qualified teachers, good quality textbooks and safe transportation, in order to increase enrolment and retention of girls in schools and reduce child labour. Invest in rural extension services, extension schools, gender-sensitive relevant curricula and training for further education and training, and access and entry to the labour market make a difference
- vi. Provide incentives for qualified agricultural workers, and rural professionals to work in rural areas, and to work in rural areas
- vii. Develop and implement rural extension services, extension schools, extension to ensure a rich society
- viii. Establish processes that call for social dialogue, and create unions; create opportunities for rural women to participate in and effectively in decision-making processes
- ix. These are minimum requirements in this respect, and the member States' efforts to improve rural extension services, extension schools, extension Organisation. We, as trade unionists, recognise that rural women are powerful and effective catalysts for sustainable development and attainment of the millennium development goals
- x. Agents against hunger and poverty
- xi. Truly if we want to eradicate hunger and poverty, we must have a world that is able to meet current global challenges, then the world has no choice but to solidify the foundation of rural women's rights because it is on their shoulders that we should place our burden of ending hunger and poverty
- xii. To live and work free from violence, the right to freedom of association, and the right to