



Statement to the Anglican Consultative Council from the Anglican Communion delegation to the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, March 2017

Who we are

The 2017 Anglican Communion delegation came to the sixty-first United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW61) from around the world, as a diverse group of individuals from different circumstances, nations, and cultures. Most came to UNCSW61 for the first time; some returned to build on work from previous years. We leave UNCSW61 with a new worldwide network; each taking increased understanding of the gender challenges and disadvantages faced by our sisters in the global Anglican Communion. We acknowledge the lived disempowerment of women and girls also negatively impacts our brothers.

These new relationships relieve our isolation, and reassure us that others care and will pray, stand, and speak out with us. We have a new understanding and focus to direct outreach support. For all, this brings an appreciation of the power that one can make a difference when joining in a collective voice. We return to our home settings transformed, with new passion, energy, and many ideas to pursue gender justice; be it locally, or on the international stage through networks established during UNCSW61.

Voice of youth

Equality is giving people the same things while equity is fairness in every situation. It is important to understand this, moreover to implement it. That is, between a woman and a young girl, a lot more work needs to be done on the girl. A lot of the young girls feel there is not enough being done in empowering the girl child. Our potential is being spoken of, but not being enabled. We yearn for opportunities and resources that will mold us into the future leaders that everyone is expecting us to be. As much as we are the future, we are also the world's 'right now'. If nothing is done, the youth feel that the ambition of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to leave no one behind will not be achieved, as they are vulnerable to actually being left behind. A country, a movement, or a person that does not value its youth and children, does not deserve its future. Inclusion and participation is key, especially at decision-making levels, to ensure that our needs are not compromised and overlooked.

The youth would like to challenge everyone to not only hear what we say but to also listen carefully as listening evokes action. Many times we are being spoken for and not given platforms or networks to speak for ourselves. Furthermore, unpaid labour is the biggest challenge that steals a girl child's time to investing in her education and on the contrary, affords a boy child the time to be in the lead in this matter. Family-sharing labour must be implemented. In the words of Josh Shipp, 'Every child is one caring parent away from being a success story'.

Priority theme - women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work

The ability of women to work and earn a living wage is critical to women's livelihood, independence, and ability to provide for their family. The world of work is swiftly changing,

influenced by rapid innovation, increasing mobility and precarious employment. Other factors driving economic injustice to women include socio-political contexts, situations of conflict, changing patterns of work, international globalization, economic factors, and unsustainable environmental exploitation.

The economic empowerment of women can be facilitated by:

- Access to quality education and health services;
- Accelerating women's participation in the paid workforce and recognition of the value contributed to society by unpaid work;
- Breaking down cultural barriers to encourage women's full participation in all tiers of society;
- Supporting better access to finance, trade opportunities and information and communications technology;
- Including women in leadership and decision-making roles in all areas of society including at all levels of government, the private sector, and the broader community;
- Working with individuals and communities at the grassroots level.

Review theme - challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls

The recently established Agenda 2030 in 2015 initiated the SDGs. This platform grew from the culmination of the work of the MDGs, whose 15-year agenda ended in 2015. As such, we reaffirm the voices of our sisters from UNCSW60, who declared to this body:

“...the SDGs are a unique and remarkable platform for action on a vision that affirms our longing as Christians to work for the kingdom of God on earth. They reflect deep biblical themes of mutual responsibility for living well together, seeking the equality of all people created in the image of God, the responsibility to care for God's earth, and God's concern for the vulnerable and marginalized.”

Emerging theme - Empowerment of Indigenous Women

Indigenous women are more severely impacted by gender injustices than other groups. This sector of society is one which transects geopolitical borders, sits at the lowest economic strata, and experiences some of the highest incidence of violence and oppression, including: gender-related violence, human trafficking, economic disadvantage, environmental racism, and loss of culture and language.

Lessons learned

Gender injustice is pervasive and prevalent across all tiers of society, though it may be overt, hidden, or simply invisible. The struggle for justice continues, and women and girls have more ability and strength than is recognised. The testimonies, panels, discussions, side and parallel events, and the experience of witnessing a UN document through its formation, has been an inspiration to us all. The Anglican Communion is an advocate and ally for the empowerment of women across continents, cultures, and communities.

Proposed Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) actions

- That the ACC continue to encourage participation from marginalized voices from both developing and developed nations, to represent the full and wonderful diversity of the Anglican Communion, including the necessity of language translation services to ensure that individuals can fully engage with UNCSW61 mechanisms.
- That the ACC encourage each Province to implement funding mechanisms to support the full and geographically balanced inclusion of Anglican voices at UNCSW. There should be no barriers.
- That the ACC encourage Anglican Provinces to intentionally learn and act to ensure full participation of women and girls in church life through structural and systematic changes such as gender responsive budgeting.
- That the ACC encourage more interfaith dialogue, and dialogue with cultural leaders, to better understand and support each other regarding women's empowerment.
- That the ACC supports Provinces to encourage the full and faithful inclusion of women at all levels of leadership in the life of the church, to the glory of God and in His service. We further recommend that Provinces raise funds to train women to participate at church and government levels.
- That the ACC publicly and emphatically denounce leaders who are involved (implicitly and explicitly) in gender-based violence.
- That the ACC make a clear and strong commitment to the SDGs, a strategic unified focus, with specific goals, on addressing the intersectionality of issues. We acknowledge that the world is changing faster than the church (and society) can sometimes keep up.

Conclusion

We are profoundly grateful for the opportunity to have gathered in the name of Christ and with the support of the Anglican Communion Office at the UN. This has been a life-changing and invaluable experience of spiritual and political benefit to us and to our communities. We vow to live the mission of Jesus to do for the least of these and therefore do for Him. We have been richly blessed by this journey, and we commit our current and future ministries to the God-given empowerment of all of God's children. Throughout the diverse experiences of us all, the underlying expression of the Anglican Communion delegation has been one of solidarity, of hope, of sisterhood. Together we will change the world!