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TEXTS ADOPTED

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**Priorities for the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women**

**European Parliament recommendation of 14 February 2017 to the Council on the EU priorities for the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2017/2001(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the proposal for a recommendation to the Council by Constance Le Grip, on behalf of the PPE Group, and Maria Arena, on behalf of the S&D Group, on the EU priorities for the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (B8-1365/2016),
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 26 May 2015 on Gender in Development and on A New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015, and of 16 December 2014 on a transformative post-2015 agenda,
  - having regard to the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and its priority theme ‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’,
  - having regard to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in Beijing and the subsequent outcome documents of the United Nations Beijing +5, +10, +15, +20 Special Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 9 June 2000, 11 March 2005, 2 March 2010 and 9 March 2015 respectively,
  - having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
  - having regard to Rule 113 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A8-0018/2017),
- A. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the EU,

enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, and one of its objectives and tasks, and whereas the EU is also guided by this principle in its external action as both dimensions should be coordinated;

- B. whereas women's human rights and gender equality are not only fundamental human rights, but preconditions for advancing development and reducing poverty and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world;
- C. whereas harassment and violence against women encompass a wide range of human rights violations; whereas any one of these abuses can leave deep psychological scars and involve physical or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts and coercion, damage the general health of women and girls, including their reproductive and sexual health, and in some instances result in death;
- D. whereas on 23 January 2017 US President Donald Trump reinstated the so-called 'global gag' rule, which prevents international organisations from receiving any US global health assistance if they provide, counsel for, refer to or advocate for abortion services - even if they are doing so with their own, non-US funds and even if abortion is legal in their country; whereas programmes which address HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, Zika response efforts and other health and disease areas will now be affected; whereas this rule will set back years of gains made in advancing the health and wellbeing of communities worldwide, especially in the area of women's and girls' rights, and could undercut healthcare access for millions worldwide;
- E. whereas the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) is to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls worldwide; whereas SDG5 is a stand-alone goal, meaning that it has to be mainstreamed into the whole 2030 Agenda and the realisation of all SDGs; whereas empowering women means providing them with the necessary tools to become economically independent, be represented equally across society, play an equal role in all spheres of life, and gain more power in public life and control over all decisions impacting their lives;
- F. whereas women are important economic agents worldwide and women's economic participation can stimulate the economy, create jobs and build inclusive prosperity; whereas countries that value and empower women to participate fully in the labour market and decision-making are more stable, prosperous and secure; whereas gender budgeting is smart economics and ensures that public spending serves the advancement of equality between women and men;
- G. whereas female creativity and entrepreneurial potential are under-exploited sources of economic growth and jobs that should be further developed;
- H. whereas 20 years after Beijing, despite solid evidence that women's empowerment is central to reducing poverty, promoting development and addressing the world's most urgent challenges, EU governments recognised that no country had fully achieved equality between women and men and empowerment for women and girls, that progress had been slow and uneven, that major gaps and forms of discrimination remained and that new challenges had emerged in the implementation of the Platform for Action's 12 critical areas of concern;
- I. whereas the EU plays an important role in fostering the empowerment of women and

girls, within the EU as well as worldwide, by political and financial means; whereas the EU must play the key role of guardian of language on women's human rights agreed by the UN and the EU;

- J. whereas women continue to produce around 80 % of food in the poorest countries and are currently the main guardians of biodiversity and crop seeds;
- K. whereas the land is not only a means of production, but a place of culture and identity; whereas access to land is therefore a fundamental component of life and an inalienable right for peasant and indigenous women;
- 1. Addresses the following recommendation to the Council:

***General conditions for empowering women and girls***

- (a) Confirm its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action and to the range of actions for women's human rights and gender equality outlined therein; confirm its commitment to the twin-track approach to women's human rights, through gender mainstreaming in all policy areas and the implementation of specific actions for women's human rights and gender equality;
- (b) Encourage policies to invest in women's and girls' equal access to high-quality education and vocational training, including formal, informal and non-formal education, and to eliminate gender disparities in these fields and across all sectors, particularly those traditionally dominated by men;
- (c) Combat all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres as a serious breach of their physical and psychological integrity preventing them from realising their full potential; advance towards the full ratification of the Istanbul Convention by all parties;
- (d) Consider that the UN, the EU and its Member States, in order to become more efficient actors globally, must also step up their domestic efforts to eliminate violence against women and gender-based violence; reiterate, therefore, its call on the Commission to propose an EU strategy to combat violence against women, including a directive laying down minimum standards; in this context, also call on all parties to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- (e) Devise policies to promote and support decent work and full employment for all women;
- (f) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care and reproductive rights as agreed in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the review conferences thereof; provide age-appropriate sexual education to girls and boys, young women and young men in order to reduce early undesired pregnancies or the spread of sexually transmitted diseases;
- (g) Strongly condemn the 'global gag' rule, which prohibits international organisations from receiving US family planning funding if they provide,

counsel for, refer to or lobby for abortion services; consider this rule as a direct attack on and a setback for gains made for women's and girls' rights; call, as a matter of urgency, on the EU and its Member States to counter the impact of the gag rule by significantly increasing sexual and reproductive health and rights funding and launching an international fund to finance access to birth control and safe and legal abortion, using both national as well as EU development funding, in order to fill the financing gap left after the Trump administration's moves to cease funding all overseas aid organisations that provide sexual and reproductive health and rights services;

- (h) Eliminate the gender pay, lifelong earnings and pension gaps;
- (i) End all forms of discrimination against women in laws and policies at all levels;
- (j) Combat all forms of gender stereotypes perpetuating inequality, violence and discrimination, in all spheres of society;
- (k) Support women's organisations at all levels in their work; involve them as partners in policymaking and ensure adequate funding;
- (l) Apply gender budgeting, as a tool of gender mainstreaming, to all public expenditure;

***Enhancing women's economic empowerment and overcoming barriers on the labour market***

- (m) Call on all parties to ratify and implement the CEDAW, giving special attention to Articles 1, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15;
- (n) Urge all parties to enact policies and laws ensuring equal access to work and equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- (o) Continue and intensify work towards policies supporting and promoting female entrepreneurship in the context of decent work and the removal of all barriers and social prejudices in establishing and running a business, including improving access to financial services, credit, venture capital and markets under equal conditions and encouraging access to information, training and networks for business purposes; in this context, recognise and promote the role of social enterprise, cooperatives and alternative business models in women's empowerment;
- (p) Recognise that macro-economic policies, particularly on budget discipline and public services, have a disproportionate impact on women, and that these gender impacts must be taken into account by policymakers;
- (q) Promote new investment in social care infrastructure, education and health care and in public provision of accessible, affordable and quality care services throughout the life cycle, including care for children, dependents and the elderly; ensure strong protection and labour rights for pregnant women during and after their pregnancies;

- (r) Support policies that favour the equal sharing of domestic and care responsibilities between women and men;
- (s) Support the establishment of an ILO convention to provide an international standard to address gender-based violence in the workplace;
- (t) Implement policies to address the phenomenon of political violence against women, including physical violence, intimidation and online harassment;
- (u) Take effective measures to abolish child labour, since millions of female children are exploited; introduce new mechanisms in current EU legislation to avoid the import of products produced using child labour;
- (v) Encourage women and girls through awareness raising campaigns and support programmes to enter academic and research careers in all scientific fields, with a special focus on the technology and digital economy;
- (w) Ensure coherence between EU internal and external policies and the Sustainable Development Goals;

***Ensuring women's equal share at all levels of decision-making***

- (x) Protect civil and political rights and support ensuring gender balance in decision-making at all levels, including political decision-making, economic policy and programmes, workplaces, business or academia;
- (y) Involve social partners, civil society and women's organisations in economic decision-making;
- (z) Strengthen women's leadership and participation in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict situations and ensure women's access to jobs, markets and political participation and leadership in countries emerging out of conflicts, all of which are essential for stability;

***Addressing the needs of the most marginalised women***

- (aa) Facilitate land ownership and access to credit for rural women and promote, encourage and support female entrepreneurial initiatives in rural areas, to enable women to become economically independent and to fully participate in and benefit from sustainable and rural development; protect and promote short food supply chains, through active policies at both internal and external level in the EU;
- (ab) Establish internal and international rules that guarantee limits to the extensive land grabbing that goes against the interests of small owners, especially women;
- (ac) Call for the engagement of rural women's organisations in local, regional, national and global policymaking and support women's networks in the exchange of experience and good practice, particularly where women's lives could be affected by the relevant decisions;

- (ad) Call on all countries to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Article 6 thereof entitled ‘Women with disabilities’;
- (ae) Emphasise the right of migrant women workers, especially migrant and refugee domestic workers, to decent working conditions and equal social protection; call for the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 189;
- (af) Urge all parties to implement policies that guarantee the rights and humane treatment of women and girl refugees;
- (ag) Ensure that gender-based persecution is considered as a basis for an asylum claim under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees;
- (ah) Emphasise the need to protect and promote the rights of LGBTI women;
- (ai) Call on the CSW, together with the CEDAW Committee, to institutionalise an intersectional approach to their analysis, and to promote the concept of combating multiple discrimination through intersectional analysis throughout all UN bodies;
- (aj) Pursue policies to address the situation of women facing poverty and social exclusion;
- (ak) Recognise the role of women as formal and informal carers, and implement policies to improve the conditions under which they provide care;

***Translating these commitments into expenditure and making them more visible***

- (al) Mobilise the resources required to realise women’s economic rights and reduce gender inequality, including through the use of the existing instruments at EU and Member State level, such as gender impact assessments; use gender budgeting for public expenditure to ensure equality between women and men and remove all gender inequalities;
- (am) Ensure the full involvement of Parliament and its Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in the decision-making process regarding the EU’s position at the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women;
- (an) Express its strong support for the work of UN Women, which is a central actor in the UN system for eliminating violence against women and girls worldwide and bringing together all relevant stakeholders in order to generate policy change and coordinate actions; call on all UN member states, as well as on the EU, to increase their funding for UN Women;

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council and, for information, to the Commission.