



Graduate Women International (GWI)

CSW63 Oral Statement

Empowerment, a pre-requisite of gender equality, is a process that requires that social protections, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure support be provided to women and girls, as it has the potential to advance their academic, social, and economic status. This process is most productive when it recognizes that women and girls are not a monolithic group and that groups, and subgroups, are subject to their own vulnerabilities. Therefore, GWI calls for the assessment of the extent and nature of these vulnerabilities in order to specifically address them, and in so doing, eliminate obstacles to women's and girls' rights to economic and social inclusion.

Social Protections have 2 tasks: to prevent and protect from economic deprivation. As it is now, in most countries, existing social protections, if they are even offered, are woefully inadequate at accomplishing this. GWI believes that governments have an obligation to meet these two goals as they apply to their most vulnerable citizens; that is, women and girls. Women and girls need to have basic financial needs met, including food, clothing, shelter, education, and personal safety. Likewise, we call on Private Sector Companies to provide women-centric, employment-related protections that include, but are not limited to, freedom from harassment, equal pay for equal work, and gender-blind hiring and promotion.

Equitable and gender responsive access to public services are central to guaranteeing that women and girls live productive lives. Yet historically, gendered



barriers to public goods and services have placed limits on women's academic and economic opportunities. Women and girls must avail themselves of the multiplicity of such services, including but not limited to, health, education, legal, and social services, if they are ever to live lives independent of societal forces that control their bodies, their minds and their environments.

Given the importance that public services play in the process of empowerment, GWI calls on UN Member States to reconsider the mass privatization of public services, as privatization has the effect of pricing such services beyond the reach of those who need them the most.

Infrastructure can be a powerful driver of gender equality when urban and rural planning incorporates women's and girls' stated needs for personal safety in public places, logistical efficiencies, and a clean environment. Roads, electricity, telecommunication grids, mass transportation, water, and sewage are but a few of the services needed to support gender equality. Therefore, GWI calls for all governments to stipulate, in all infrastructure contracts, that women's perspectives become an intrinsic part of the planning and implementation process.

Finally, Governments must recognize that by advancing gender equality they accelerate economic growth. This reconceptualization will, of necessity, require adequate funding from national budgets and proper implementation.

Thank you.