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Integration and coordination of efforts by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by Member States in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice: other activities in support of the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in particular activities of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme network, non-governmental organizations and other bodies

Statement submitted by ZONTA International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following paper, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* [E/CN.15/2025/1](#).

** Issued without formal editing.



Over 100 years, ZONTA International and its members have fought hard to promote the rights of women and girls around the world, and we appreciate the UNODC Strategy 2026-2030 and the recommendations of this CCPCJ session on Justice for All with a focus on human rights, gender, disability and youth, as well as the inclusion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the theme of the 2026 Crime Congress.

But we could be witnessing a systematic, disturbing rollback of women's rights worldwide, setting back decades of work toward a fairer, more just world not only for women and girls but for entire societies.

These attacks on women's rights, as well as the cuts in important funding, not only harm individuals, but also destabilize international efforts to combat poverty, inequality and oppression.

These attacks and cuts are deeply troubling and regressive, as they threaten the fundamental, hard-won progress in advancing gender equality and sustainable development, and upholding human rights, disregard the needs of the most vulnerable populations, weaken the global partnership and betray the values that should guide us all.

Our mission is rooted in the belief that every woman and girl deserves equality, justice and the opportunity to thrive.

It is essential to reaffirm that true, long-lasting development cannot be achieved without the full participation and empowerment of women and girls, thus all UNODC Programs must include gender perspectives and human rights considerations.

Ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, strengthens communities, drives innovation, and accelerates collective progress toward a more just and sustainable world.

Women in Conflicts

Gender equality is also a cornerstone for achieving peace and security worldwide.

Women's participation strengthens peace agreements, but in 2023 women accounted for only 10% of negotiators, 14% of mediators and 27% of signatories.

Armed Conflicts can lead to an escalation of hate and violence, innocent civilians are involved and women and children are often the most adversely affected.

Since 2022, cases of conflict-related sexual violence have increased by 50% and women and girls suffer from 95% of these crimes.

In 2023, about 612 million women and girls lived within 50 km of at least 1 of 170 armed conflicts, an increase of 54% since 2010.

UN Security Resolution 1325 "calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, as well as all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict."

Additionally, pregnant women may be unable to access essential health care services during armed conflicts, and are at risk of giving birth without health care or clean water.

Gender-based violence

Women's health is as well impacted by extreme weather, for example, extreme heat is associated with preterm birth, low birth weight, menstrual irregularities and heat stress.

Climate change can have an impact on gender-based violence, as can be seen in disaster areas, for example, a 1°C annual average temperature increase is associated with a 6% increase in physical and sexual violence against women.

Additionally, it is harder for women to recover from disaster. The global gender pay gap is 23%, and the hours women spend on unpaid work increase during disasters.

The current restriction on humanitarian funding will risk the continuation of GBV services for women and girls, including safe spaces, maternal health and contraceptives supplies, so it is critical to continue important programs to prevent violence against women and girls, including climate-induced gender-based violence and other harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage.

Adequate funding for education, health and the social and humanitarian sector must be ensured to avoid further negative impacts on efforts to end child marriage.

In 2021–2022, 42% of bilateral allocable official development assistance made gender equality a policy objective, this was down from 45% in 2019–2020.

Only 4% of the aid went to programmes with gender equality as the principal objective.

Cybercrime

New, emerging and evolving forms of crime such as cybercrime including cyber-enabled fraud, and crimes that affect the environment threaten economic stability and social order and undermine efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Organized fraud and cybercrime affect individuals, businesses and governments and pose significant risks to national security, economic stability and personal privacy.

Across 12 countries in Europe and Central Asia, 53% of adult women going online have experienced some form of technology facilitated gender-based violence at least once.

Addressing these offences, protection has to include the transfer of knowledge and awareness, as well as safeguarding victims and providing support services.

International cooperation must extend beyond law enforcement authorities to include the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

The Cyber Crime Convention mentions child sexual abuse, but there is a gap regarding technology-enabled abuse of women that should be closed.

Technology companies play a pivotal role in combating cybercrime by being able to implement stronger security measures, detect malicious activity and cooperating with authorities to dismantle criminal networks.

They must be called upon to resolutely prevent cybercrime, with a focus on gender-based violence facilitated by technology.

Crimes that affect the environment

Crimes that affect the environment jeopardize ecosystems, biodiversity, livelihoods and public health, exacerbating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, further weakening the ability to adapt to climate change.

54% of countries globally describe climate emergency as a barrier to further progress.

For example, we are seeing more child marriages as families struggle after droughts and floods.

A 10% increase or decrease in annual rainfall is equivalent to a 1% increase in child marriages.

A major challenge is a lack of awareness of the impact of crimes that affect the environment, on the people affected.

This makes it difficult for their rights to be respected, protected and fulfilled.

Women's political representation is associated with stronger climate change policies, but women make up only 28% of environment ministers globally.

Environmental organizations and advocacy groups contribute to crime prevention by monitoring illegal activities, reporting violations and promoting policy reforms.

It is therefore crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which references the need for strengthening global partnerships to prevent and combat those offences.

ZONTA's work aims on educating women and girls in climate literacy and STEM projects and on including women's needs in disaster planning and recovery.

Women's voices have to be amplified at decision-making tables to increase gendered contribution to climate actions.

Climate Change widens gender gaps, empowering women closes the gaps.

We call for continued support for organizations that are on the frontlines of providing lifesaving aid and promoting human dignity, to cooperate with the private sector and civil society organisations in times of funding constraints and to ensure that their voices are heard and their rights are respected.

The Sustainable Development Goals, which have been endorsed by virtually every nation on Earth, serve as a comprehensive global framework for inclusive development, human dignity, and the promise of a better future for all.

Zonta International urgently calls on all nations to reaffirm their commitment to the SDGs, particularly the critical pursuit of gender equality.

The time to act is now.

We must not allow decades of hard-won progress to be reversed.

Zonta International urges leaders and citizens alike to stand up, speak out, and take decisive action to ensure that gender equality remains at the forefront of global development efforts.

Our shared future depends on it, and the moment to make a difference is now.
