



UN WOMEN

**PROMOTING POLICIES FOR SAFE CITIES, PUBLIC SPACES AND TRANSPORT
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

BACKGROUND GUIDE

SAIMUN 2021

LETTER FROM CHAIR.

Dear Delegates.

Welcome to 2021 Sub-Saharan International Model United Nations UN WOMEN Committee. My name is Hamdi Jamala Mohamoud, I will be your chair this year. I am excited to chair the UN WOMEN Committee. 2021 is an exciting year for UN WOMEN, as the target date for SDGs approaches, we must reflect on past achievements and failures as we move forward to achieve future progress.

I anticipate meeting all of you at the conference and hope that this topic will lead to impactful Committee debate and deliberation. Please do not hesitate to contact me, if you have any questions.

Regards,

Hamdi Jamala

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INTRODUCTION OF THE COMMITTEE.

UN women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN women supports UN member states as they set their global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide.

It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the optional protocol the "women's bill of rights" is a cornerstone of all UN WOMEN programmes. More than 185 countries are parties to the Convention. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) adopted by governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, this document sets forth governments' commitments to enhance women's rights. Member states reaffirmed and strengthened the platform in 2000 during the global five-year review of progress and pledged to accelerate its implementation during the 10-year review in 2005, the 15-year review in 2010, and the 20-year review in 2015. UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000) recognized that war impacts women differently, and reaffirmed the need to increase women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

The UN Security Council subsequently adopted seven additional resolutions on women, peace and security. Taken together, the nine resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries. In September 2015, governments united behind an ambitious agenda that features 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that aim to end poverty, combat inequalities and promote prosperity while protecting the environment by 2030. They were preceded by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015.

1. Statement of the problem.

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces, both in urban and rural settings, are an everyday occurrence for women and girls in every country around the world. Women and girls experience and fear different forms of sexual violence in public spaces. It happens on streets, in and around public transportation, schools, workplaces, public toilets, water and food distribution sites, and parks.

This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom of movement. It reduces their ability to participate in school, work, and public life. It limits their access to essential services and their enjoyment of cultural and recreational activities, and negatively impacts their health and well-being.

The impact of violence on women and girls is severe in emergency settings, especially in contexts with poor functioning health systems, weak rule of law, high levels of violence against women and gender inequality.

Before COVID-19, in many cities across the world women's perception of safety in public transport was much lower than men's perceptions. During the lockdown, public transport has also been severely reduced. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruptions to daily lives and the operation of businesses and services especially in countries and cities with curfews and restrictions on movement.



2. History.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 as a comprehensive and visionary agenda for achieving gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights for women and girls.¹ It contains a call for the removal of systematic and structural barriers that prevent women and girls from enjoying their human rights across social, economic, political and environmental domains, and policy actions to achieve the vision. States concluded that the redistribution of power and resources between women and men in the public and private spheres was inextricably tied in with the broader goals of achieving equality for all, sustainability and peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies.²

The vision of Beijing was reaffirmed in 2015, when States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with human rights and gender equality as core principles and the ambitious aims of eradicating poverty, reducing multiple and intersecting inequalities, addressing climate change, ending conflict and sustaining peace. Building on the Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda underscores that, for development to be sustainable, its benefits must accrue equally to women and men and that women's rights will only become a reality in the broader context of efforts to protect the planet and ensure that all people may live in dignity.³



¹ United Nations, Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Since 2015, States have stepped up the introduction and reform of legislation, policies and programmes to advance gender equality. Globally, the top priorities over the past five years, as reflected in national reports, have included:

- The elimination of violence against women and girls.
- Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care.
- Political participation and representation.
- Good quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls.

Priorities in developing regions reflected the global priorities. In developed regions, more attention has been paid to women's right to work and their rights in the workplace, the issues of unpaid care and domestic work, work-family conciliation and efforts to change negative social norms and gender stereotypes.⁴

3. Recent Developments.

There is limited access to critical services, including sanitation and safe housing and an increase in unpaid care work across the globe during COVID-19. Stay-at-home orders and frequent hygiene practices are essential to cope with the health pandemic. However, in low- and middle-income countries, women are overrepresented in urban slums and they are at a higher risk of being exposed to gender-based violence.⁵

Local governments can take action to respond to the public health crisis, and mitigate the social and economic impacts of COVID 19 on women and girls and communities in partnership with state/provincial and national governments, women's rights organizations, other civil society groups, UN Agencies, and the private sector.⁶

These uncertain times require more than ever leaders within and across countries, cities and communities to draw their strengths and expertise across different sectors (public health, transportation, education, employment, law enforcement, etc.), different levels of government

⁴ Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century. Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General.

⁵ United Nations (9 April, 2020), Policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women.

⁶ UN Women (2020). Corporate Brief on Covid-19 and Ending violence against Women and Girls.

and in partnership with international and national civil society organizations and UN agencies to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable cities and public spaces with women throughout all phases of the pandemic. The needs and concerns of women who face multiple forms of discrimination and violence need to be prioritized.



4. Questions to consider when coming up with a resolution.

1. Violence against women and girls including sexual harassment in public spaces and transport facilities have increased over the years with little efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice. How can the UN WOMEN Committee work with National governments to adopt proactive policies that protect women and girls?
2. Should there be an international framework that can be used to enhance public safety?
3. How can the UN WOMEN committee ensure such policies protecting women and girls in public spaces and transport facilities are adopted and put into action?

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