

Women's Rights Caucus Statement – Protect Women and Girls by upholding the Beijing Declaration

The Women's Rights Caucus, representing over 900 feminist advocates from around the world, urges you to oppose the proposed US draft resolution entitled "Protection of women and girls through appropriate terminology." Despite the title, we do not feel protected nor represented by this initiative.

On the heels of the first-ever recorded vote on the agreed conclusions of the annual meetings of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and in complete disregard of the significant opposition their proposal got in the negotiation room, the United States has circulated a new resolution proposal which attempts to falsely state that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action agreed that "gender" was defined as "men and women". It attributes to annex IV of the Report of the Fourth World Conference of Women a meaning that was never agreed by Member States, effectively rewriting the historical record rather than clarifying it.

The US resolution raises concerns both in its substance and procedure, specifically in the way it seeks to reinterpret agreed language, with implications for accuracy, process, and precedence. Adopting this resolution is a direct challenge to the integrity of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The resolution imposes an interpretation that establishes a definition that would directly affect how different countries make Beijing their own - one that serves the interests of powerful forces seeking to bend international norms to their will and roll back thirty years of hard-won gains. We urge Member States not to play into this gaslighting.

We want to set the record right:

1. Annex IV does not define "gender," and Annex IV does not reflect agreed language.

Annex IV reflects the discussions of an informal contact group and was not adopted as negotiated language by Member States. The contact group found that (1) the word "gender" had been commonly used and understood in its ordinary, generally accepted usage in numerous other United Nations forums and conferences; and (2) there was no indication that any new meaning or connotation of the term, different from accepted prior usage, was intended in the Platform for Action.

Annex IV neither defined what "prior usage" was nor that gender refers to "men and women," as the US falsely claims it does. The finding was not adopted by the Beijing Conference but instead read out by the President and annexed to the Conference's report.

In the decades since, both rights and language have advanced - at the CSW, within the CEDAW jurisprudence, at the General Assembly and across the broader human rights mechanisms of the multilateral system.

2. This is not just about CSW.

This resolution creates a precedent of reopening previously settled and agreed language in other contexts, with implications extending well beyond the Commission on the Status of Women. This is

not about introducing new concepts but is about preserving the integrity of what has already been agreed. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action represents a hard-won global consensus and it should not be reinterpreted.

3. This resolution does not strengthen the UN framework or enhance its credibility.

This practice steamrolls over the good faith of negotiations. The fact of the matter remains that the US has tried thrice to introduce their interpretation of Annex IV into the CSW70 agreed conclusions: during negotiations, in their written comments, and then again as an oral amendment to the agreed conclusions in the final moments before adoption. All three times their suggestions were rejected. This signals that the wider UN membership does not agree with their rewriting of history. Furthermore, by introducing this as a resolution in the final moments after the adoption, it creates a precedent where Member States, who are frustrated that their priorities have been rejected in good faith negotiations, can unilaterally force their own national priorities onto other countries.

4. This resolution is not a “clarification” of Annex IV.

Presenting the resolution as such risks creating confusion about the content of agreed UN frameworks and blurs the distinction between agreed language and subsequent interpretation. It also risks presenting as settled what was never agreed. In practice, this amounts to retroactively assigning clarity to a point that remained unresolved at the time.

5. This resolution does not protect us.

It re-interprets and weakens the very international norms that uphold our rights. This is not a question of interpretation alone, but of whether agreed language can be reshaped outside its respective technical fora. The strength and integrity of the multilateral system is built upon the credibility of its commitments. Accuracy matters. Process matters. Precedent matters. The integrity of international law and human rights law is what protects us. In this critical moment, we must resist efforts to unilaterally and retroactively re-interpret long-held definitions and principles.

We urge all Member States and fellow citizens of the world to stand up for the integrity and accountability of multilateralism. **We call on Member States to uphold the founding principles of the UN and our established frameworks for human rights and gender equality**, and thereby, stand up for us all. We are counting on you.