

Thursday March 5, 2020

Commission on the Status of Women
220 East 42nd Street, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10017 USA

CALL TO POSTPONE ADOPTION OF CSW POLITICAL DECLARATION

The Commission on the Status of Women acknowledges the importance of 2020 for the “accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere”, being the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and fifth anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹

Following the decision that the 64th session of the Commission will convene on 9 March to hold a procedural meeting to adopt the draft Political Declaration, we, the Global Alliance on Media and Gender, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) Network, and the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), are concerned that the small but certain steps made towards gender equality in and through the media will be reversed as the policy support for intervention is weakened. Since 1995 the Beijing Platform for Action has undergirded and lent firm support to the work of civil society actors and various stakeholders engaged in implementing the recommendations contained in Section J on ‘women and the media.’

We are concerned that the [final draft version](#) of the Political Declaration omits a clear commitment to ending violence against women and sexual minorities in all spheres including the media offline and online and to eliminating gender stereotyping in the media. It is widely recognized that the fair and balanced portrayal of women in the media plays a key role in helping to address structural barriers and discriminatory norms in society and we feel strongly that the Political Declaration should make this clear. Mass media and social media are central "stakeholders" in the achievement of gender equality and women’s rights.

In 2015 UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka underlined the profound impact that gender-discriminatory media coverage has in shaping societal attitudes and reinforcing traditional gender roles”.² At the time, the needle towards gender parity in the people seen, heard or read about in the news had shifted by only seven points in 20 years, implying that achievement of gender equality in presence and voice was still more than six decades away. This year the GMMP Network will reconvene to generate evidence on the progress made, or lack thereof, since 1995.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) network of civil society organizations, women’s rights groups, activists, journalists and scholars in 137 countries monitors gender patterns in the news media every five years since 1995.³ The GMMP’s statistical evidence shows patterns of continued marginalisation and trivialization of women’s voices, concerns and opinions in the media worldwide and the Declaration should reflect commitment to action on these issues. The Global Alliance on Media and Gender has 956 member

¹ CSW website <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

² Foreword to the report “Who makes the news? The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)” (2015, p. 4)

³ www.whomakesthenews.org

organisations in 142 countries. WACC, which coordinates the GMMP and has organizational and individual members in eight regions, advocates for full and equal access to information and communication for all.

Together, we call on the Commission of the Status of Women to postpone the adoption of the Political Declaration until later this year once substantive, broadly participatory and democratic deliberation has been had on these and other issues that are pertinent for the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, SDG 5 and other gender-related goals in the 2030 Agenda.

Global Media Monitoring Project: www.whomakesthenews.org

Global Alliance on Media and Gender: www.gamag.net

World Association for Christian Communication: www.waccglobal.org and www.ccrvoices.org