

Women's Major Group

***Women's Major Group statement to the
United Nations Human Rights Council
4th Intersessional Meeting for Dialogue and Cooperation on
Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***

*“Investing in sustainable recovery, advancing gender equality and strengthening partnerships –
Towards a renewed social contract anchored in human rights”*

Over two years from the onset of the pandemic, women and girls in all their diversity and their organizations continue to be at the frontlines of the responses. As one of our members, Sanam Amin, rightly put: “Banks did not save us, the military did not save us. Women saved us... Women are central to COVID response.” Over centuries, through our paid and unpaid labor, women and girls keep homes, communities, and economies afloat. Yet, governments, corporations, and non-state actors continue to undermine our ability to effectively and meaningfully participate in policy-making and implementation, including through threats, harassment, discrimination and violence.

Some governments have used the COVID-19 emergency to crackdown on human rights defenders, shrink civil society spaces and limit press freedom, while disinformation is rampant. Women and LGBTQI+ defenders face particular risks. Increased climate of repression, even under the pandemic circumstances, has contributed to shrinking space for civil society to operate and freely advocate for human rights.

Anti-rights movements, in connection with those that benefit from the current unequal systems, threaten international human rights standards established over decades, as

well as the everyday lives of many, but especially women, girls and LGBTQI+ communities, and those systematically marginalized.

Without systemic change, structural inequalities and human rights violations will continue to shape our pandemic responses, derailing us further from achieving gender equality and Agenda 2030.

States should heed the call of feminist advocates including feminist grassroots movements and place human rights and gender equality at the center of pandemic recovery and the implementation of Agenda 2030.

For this, further policy coherence between sustainable development and human rights work, both at the level of the UN, as well as at the regional, national and local levels is mandatory. Treaty body reports and reports by Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts should become important sources for the review of Agenda 2030 at all levels.

The human rights norms and systems are our anchors for a just, equal and sustainable world, and we are ready to defend them together on all fronts!