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Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Integrating a Gendered Perspective in Decision-Making and Activity

The Sikh Human Rights Group is committed to a gendered perspective at every stage of decision-making process in human organisation, institutions and especially the United Nations. There is particularly a need to ensure integrated gendered approaches in the field of everyday health. We stress that in our projects.

Integrated gendered decision making and activity has been at the core of the Sikh worldview ever since it was first expressed in sixteenth century. Examples of women being involved in important community decisions, being at the helm of political leadership, leading armies of defence, taking leading roles in religious institutions, democratic representation and occupations abound in the five centuries of Sikh history. A gender neutral institutionalisation of names, institutional roles and perspectives is evident in many areas of Sikh activity.

Similarly integrating a gender perspective is an imperative of paramount significance on the global stage. Given the state of our world under rapidly deteriorating and dangerous climate change, erosion of biodiversity, protracted wars, inequalities of income and opportunities, poverty, hunger, health inequalities, monopoly of access to resources, we ask whether the world can be called a success under a male dominated and male orientated progress. Isn't it time to bring all genders into the heart of decision making and progress at all levels?

A gendered perspective will address historical and systemic gender inequalities, uphold human rights, responsibilities and duties and propel sustainable development. A gender perspective discerns the pervasive marginalisation and discrimination experienced by individuals based on gender, which perpetuates unequal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power this depriving these of a balanced approach.

In our statement, we want to ensure that the urgency and importance of integrating a gender perspective is conveyed and the significance of an intersectional gender voice is essential.

In practice, embracing intersectionality in feminism means actively listening to and centring the experiences of marginalised women, amplifying their voices, and working collaboratively to dismantle systemic inequalities that affect various aspects of their lives as well as giving their inputs respect and power in decisions.

In previous statements we have been advocating a Declaration on Diversity that would encourage a positive and complimentary dimension to rights-based approach and encourage states to address discrimination in a pluralist manner and listen to all voices. The integration of a gender perspective is pivotal for the recognition and safeguarding of the rights of all individuals, irrespective of their gender identity. It is the bedrock of principles such as establishing equality where historical inequalities existed, non-discrimination, and preserving human dignity enshrined within the fabric of international human rights and related agreements. Achieving gender equality, dignity and respect are indispensable for sustainable development. When women and girls enjoy equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making, it catalyses economic growth and propels social progress. A gender perspective is paramount in fostering peaceful and secure societies. Acknowledging the unique vulnerabilities women and girls face during conflicts and engaging them in conflict prevention and resolution efforts significantly contributes to enduring peace. Infusing a gender perspective into policies and programs ensures their responsiveness to different genders' diverse needs and experiences. This holistic approach culminates in more effective and pertinent outcomes.

Gender Perspective on Health

Sikh Human Rights Group have been working closely with other NGOs and some States in advocating for better access, education and dignity around menstrual health and overall women's health project.

Integrating a gender perspective is essential when addressing women's health due to the unique biological, social, and cultural factors influencing their health outcomes. The gender perspective recognises that physical differences do not solely determine health but are profoundly shaped by the roles, expectations, and inequalities assigned to individuals based on gender.

It is essential that we recognise the need for tailored healthcare, given the differences in needs and vulnerabilities between each gender. A gender perspective enables healthcare providers to understand and address these differences, leading to more tailored and effective healthcare interventions. When we integrate gender perspectives, we reduce the gender norms that tend to limit women's access to healthcare services, particularly in patriarchal societies.

With regards to menstrual and reproductive health, these issues are so often stigmatised and ignored. If we had a better, integrated gender perspective, then we would ensure menstrual disorders are taken seriously and diagnosed, in addition to issues and complications during reproductive health. If we had integrated the gender perspective, then there would be better research and data available, and we would know how certain drugs and resources work on the female body.

When women and girls are integrated into the decision-making process, they are able to provide a fresh, often overlooked perspective and provide insight into the other half of the world and their needs. Likewise, once they are involved in decisions, they can better implement policies that consider gender differences which are often more likely to comprehensively address women's health needs, leading to better health outcomes and reducing health disparities.

In conclusion, integrating a gender perspective in women's health is not just about biological differences; it's about acknowledging the social and cultural context that profoundly shapes women's health experiences. By doing so, we can ensure that healthcare is equitable, effective, and respectful of women's diverse needs and identities.

To amplify the integration of a gender perspective with a pluralistic approach, we propose the following actions:

Inclusive Representation: Foster diverse representation and amplify the voices of all genders in decision-making processes across the United Nations and elevate them to key leadership roles and postings. This will encourage States to do so as well.

Gender Mainstreaming: Infuse gender considerations into all United Nations policies, programs, and activities. Systematically scrutinise intersections of gender with various issues and redress gender disparities correspondingly.

Education and Training: Disseminate comprehensive training and education on gender issues to UN staff and member states. This encompasses gender-sensitive language, gender-responsive budgeting, and gender analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis: Gather and analyse sex-disaggregated data to identify gender disparities and inform evidence-based policy formulation. This data holds the potential to gauge progress towards gender parity objectives.

Resource Allocation: Allocate substantial resources to gender-focused initiatives and programs that advance women's leadership, economic empowerment, and reproductive health.

Partnerships: Forge collaborations with civil society organisations, grassroots movements, and feminist groups that champion gender dignity, respect and equality. These partnerships enrich policy formulation with ground-level insights.

Gender Norms Transformation: Pioneering campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices is pivotal in all societal strata.

Women, Peace, and Security: Endeavor to implement and uphold the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security. Ensure the active participation and protection of women in conflict and post-conflict scenarios.

Understand the diversity of cultural norms on gender parity, respect and dignity to ensure end to discrimination and marginalisation and promote inclusion.

The pursuit of a pluralistic approach embracing diversity and acknowledging the intricate interplay of gender with other social identities is instrumental. The United Nations, through this approach, stands poised to further the integration of a gender perspective and pave the way for a world that is more equitable, just, and inclusive of diversity.
