

Human Rights Council – 43rd Session

Item 8 on 16 June 2020

Joint Statement on Women in Multilateralism

On the 25th Anniversary year of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, following last year's 40th anniversary of CEDAW, I deliver this statement on behalf of 13 Pacific nations: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The multilateral system allows us to address collectively global issues beyond any one State's means of control. This is critical for smaller and developing States.

However, without the voices of women, we only hear half the story. A robust and effective multilateral system requires the equal status and full participation of women and girls.

Pacific nations recognise that this is essential for addressing violence against women and girls, women's economic empowerment, development outcomes, and enhancing women's participation in decision-making, including in peace and security.

Currently, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the HRC President and the three Pacific Permanent Representatives are all women. This should not be unusual.

Inclusive decision-making processes reflect societies' needs. There is strong evidence that diversity among decision-makers leads to better outcomes for human rights, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and social and economic development.

The barriers to women's participation are often invisible, underpinned by gender stereotypes, cultural practices and longstanding structural, social and economic inequalities. Dismantling such barriers requires strong policy commitments and a willingness to challenge the status quo.

The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration sets out their commitment to tackling these barriers and to implementing national policies to increase women's participation in all levels of decision-making. The 1st Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report in 2018 acknowledged progress towards meeting the Declaration's goals. The Pacific Platform for Action on gender equality and women's human rights 2018-2030 also unites Pacific nations on increasing women's empowerment.

Pacific nations call on States to work together to commit to a multilateral system where women's equal leadership is the norm.