



## Global Unions' Response to the Secretary-General's Report for the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Global Unions welcome many aspects of the [report](#) prepared by the Secretary-General, *Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*, ahead of the 63<sup>rd</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women's discussions on the topic. We appreciate in particular the comprehensive nature of the report, which addresses the interlinkages between social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure. The emphasis on a rights-based approach, universality and gender responsiveness is a very positive aspect of the report; however, given that these concepts are critical for the debate and political decisions that will stem from it, we recommend that these principles be further elaborated, translating them into concrete strategies and policies to eliminate gender inequalities.

During the CSW63 discussions, we will continue to highlight the critical role of trade unions as a precondition for securing decent work, especially for women workers. We will also insist on the essential and primary role of the State as the guarantor of the human rights of all women and girls, especially the most vulnerable, including those facing intersecting forms of discrimination. We call on States to deliver rights-based systems for social protection, quality gender-responsive public services - for care, health, education, water, sanitation, energy, transport, access to information and public broadcasting - as well as sustainable infrastructure

Unions welcome the focus in the report to equal pay measures, improved access to decent work and strengthened collective bargaining. Moreover, we support the strong emphasis in the report on the importance of work-family reconciliation policies, including greater access to maternity protection, and expanded options for parental leave for fathers in order to support a greater gender balance in the distribution of care responsibilities. We call for the transformation and quality enhancement of public services with regard to gender equality, in which women public services workers are critical, as well as the improvement of their working conditions, for what we as unions are essential. Additionally, we will call for the recognition of the important role played by community health workers and emphasize their right to be considered as formal workers, to unionize and to exercise their collective bargaining rights.

Global Unions fully agree with the report's recommendations to give greater recognition and value for unpaid care work and domestic work, to extend social protection to unpaid caregivers and workers in the informal economy, and to support the productivity and viability of work in the informal economy. However, we underline that these measures should be considered together with measures to support the formalization of the informal economy, in which women are disproportionately represented, in line with ILO Recommendation 204.



As Global Unions, we have long promoted the full implementation of the ILO Recommendation on Social Protection Floors; it is, therefore, encouraging to see that the report underlines the need to extend such floors, including minimum guaranteed pensions. Despite this, we regret that the report fails to mention International Labour Standards, which would help to ensure alignment between the report and existing ILO Conventions and Recommendations. Freedom of association should have been explicitly stressed in the report, noting the role of unions as legitimate stakeholders that should routinely be included and consulted in all discussions and decision-making on the topics at hand.

We also fully endorse the aspects of the report addressing gender biases within social protection systems, which include crediting care periods within social security schemes to avoid penalising women who have taken time off to do domestic care work, and harmonization of contribution periods between women and men. Nevertheless, it is regretful that the report did not consider the importance of adequate survivors' benefits in providing financial security for women, nor the need for adequate indexation of social protection benefits over time.

We have major concerns about the emphasis on the role of the private sector in the report, with regard to the provision of social protection, basic public services and infrastructure such as water and sanitation. The report's recommendation for integrated implementation of gender responsive social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure between public and private (profit and not-for-profit) is problematic. Global Unions insist that the human rights-based approach advanced in the report cannot be guaranteed within a 'for-profit' system. We view it as the State's primary responsibility to finance, plan and deliver social protection, in line with ILO Recommendation 202, in order to ensure statutory, rights-based schemes. Likewise, the State has the role of guaranteeing essential service provision including for care, health, education, water, sanitation, energy, transport, access to information and public broadcasting services.

We would have wished for a greater emphasis on the role of progressive tax policies and combatting illicit financial flows and tax evasion in order to create an enabling environment for domestic resource mobilization. While such measures were mentioned briefly in the beginning of the report, they were ultimately not included as part of the policy recommendations advanced in the report. However, these measures are indispensable for the provision of adequate social protection, quality public services and sustainable infrastructure that truly empowers women and girls and advances gender equality.

Global Unions' full position statement for the 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UN CSW can be found [here](#).