

E/CN.6/2026/NGO/XX

Commission on the Status of Women

Seventieth session – United Nations, New York, March 2026

Item: Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers.

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN (BPW INTERNATIONAL)**

Non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International), founded in 1930 by Dr. Lena Madelin Phillips, is a global network active in more than 100 countries. It is dedicated to advancing the business, professional and leadership potential of women. Since its inception, BPW has promoted economic independence, equal opportunity, and the removal of structural barriers to women's participation in public and economic life.

2. From its earliest years, BPW International played a formative role in shaping the multilateral system. BPW was one of the first women's organizations to advocate for an international framework guaranteeing equal rights of women and men. It participated in the 1945 San Francisco Conference and promoted the inclusion of the principle of equality of the sexes in the Charter of the United Nations. As one of the first NGOs to receive ECOSOC consultative status, BPW has maintained a permanent partnership with the United Nations in pursuit of equality, justice and peace.

3. Today, BPW continues this legacy by advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Yet across the world, women still face justice systems that are financially prohibitive, procedurally complex and insufficiently gender-responsive. Persistent legal discrimination,

gender-based violence—including online abuse—and underrepresentation in decision-making perpetuate inequality and weaken women’s safety, security and voice in governance.

4. BPW International views accessible, affordable, survivor-centred justice and full participation in decision-making as mutually reinforcing. When women can claim their rights and influence institutions, they shape laws, workplaces and societies free from discrimination and violence. BPW’s mission—economic empowerment, leadership development and the removal of legal barriers—supports this transformation and contributes directly to a just and peaceful world.

## **II. BPW INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES**

5. **Leadership and mentoring.** BPW operates a long-standing Mentoring Task Force and convenes the BPW Leaders’ Summit (most recently in New York, 2025) to prepare women for senior roles in business, governance and public decision-making. These initiatives offer structured mentoring, leadership training and cross-regional peer support, cultivating a generation of women leaders capable of influencing justice and policy systems.

6. **Entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.** Through its global initiative WITH – Women’s Entrepreneurship and Trade, BPW connects women entrepreneurs to international markets, strengthens trade readiness and promotes gender-responsive supply chains. BPW-supported entrepreneurship and incubator training initiatives have delivered online coaching to women-led micro and small enterprises across regions, strengthening resilience, innovation and income security. By fostering economic independence, these programmes enable women to seek justice and participate fully in public life.

7. **Equal pay and workplace equity.** Through Equal Pay Day campaigns and the initiative “Let’s Close the Gender Pay Gap Together,” BPW mobilizes members and partners to advocate for pay transparency, anti-discrimination enforcement and gender-responsive budgeting—crucial enablers for women to assert their rights and access justice.

8. United Nations engagement and violence-prevention advocacy. BPW maintains active ECOSOC consultative status and organizes parallel events at the Commission on the Status of Women, addressing hidden and under-reported forms of violence, including online harassment. These efforts inform global policy dialogue and promote survivor-centred legal responses. BPW National Federations, such as BPW Canada, prepare and support delegations that contribute meaningfully to CSW negotiations and follow-up work.

9. **Partnership with the United Nations system and the private sector.** BPW International has long collaborated with the United Nations and the business community to advance women's economic empowerment and ethical corporate leadership. As one of the civil-society organizations that helped shape the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)—a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact—BPW continues to promote gender equality, transparency and accountability in business practices. Through its partnerships and advocacy, BPW encourages companies to adopt inclusive policies that ensure equal pay, career advancement and work–life balance, aligning economic development with human rights and peace.

10. **Promoting peace through empowerment.** Guided by its 2024–2027 triennium vision, BPW International affirms that peace is inseparable from justice and equality. Through the BPW International Task Force for Peace, BPW connects empowerment, leadership and dialogue as pathways to social harmony and conflict prevention, mobilizing women from all regions to translate economic independence into peacebuilding capacity.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES AND STAKEHOLDERS

11. **Reform discriminatory laws and practices.** Undertake comprehensive reviews of national legislation to eliminate discrimination in family, labour, property and nationality laws. Amend or abolish provisions that restrict women's legal capacity, economic autonomy or access to resources. Ensure survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and technology-aware procedures to address all forms of gender-based and online violence. Integrate women's organizations—including business and professional women's

networks—into law-reform consultations so that policies reflect women’s lived realities and professional expertise.

**12. Invest in accessible, affordable and innovation-driven justice systems.** Justice must be not only available but attainable. Expand legal aid, pro bono and community-based legal services, while investing in mobile and digital justice tools that reach rural, migrant and marginalized women. Simplify judicial and administrative procedures and guarantee language, cultural and disability accommodations. Integrate financial literacy, entrepreneurship support and gender-responsive budgeting into justice programmes, acknowledging that economic independence is essential for women’s full access to rights and remedies.

**13. Increase women’s representation, ethical leadership and influence in decision-making.** Achieve gender parity across the judiciary, prosecution services, policing, oversight bodies and public boards, while promoting a culture of ethical and values-based leadership. Introduce mandatory gender, peace and human-rights training for all justice-sector professionals. Adopt transparent and inclusive recruitment practices that open opportunities to young and diverse women. Protect women human-rights defenders and professional advocates from intimidation or retaliation, recognizing them as essential partners in democratic governance and peacebuilding.

**14. Strengthen institutional accountability, gender data and civil-society participation.** Establish independent mechanisms to monitor implementation of legal reforms and the performance of justice institutions. Collect and publish sex- and age-disaggregated data on access to justice, case outcomes and gender-based violence. Engage civil society—particularly women’s professional associations, entrepreneurs and mentoring networks—as co-creators of accountability frameworks. Promote public–private partnerships that align business ethics and corporate governance with equality, justice and peace.

#### **IV. FORWARD COMMITMENT**

**15. Peer learning and evidence sharing.** BPW will enhance opportunities for its Federations and Clubs to exchange data and lessons on economic-empowerment and leadership

initiatives that indirectly strengthen women's access to justice. Global events such as the BPW Leaders' Summit will continue to serve as platforms for this exchange.

**16. Mentoring future justice leaders.** BPW will adapt its leadership curriculum to support women pursuing careers in law, governance and public policy, encouraging more women lawyers, judges and administrators to reach decision-making positions and shape gender-responsive institutions.

**17. Monitoring and advocacy.** BPW will integrate access-to-justice and violence-prevention indicators into its United Nations reporting and national advocacy, supporting the follow-up of CSW Agreed Conclusions and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

18. BPW International believes that fair and inclusive justice systems are the cornerstone of equality and peace. Without affordable, survivor-centred justice, discrimination and violence persist, and women's participation in leadership remains incomplete. When women can trust and influence justice institutions, societies become safer, more equitable and more prosperous.

19. Beyond legal and economic empowerment, BPW International affirms that lasting peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of fairness, dignity and opportunity for all. Through its leadership, partnerships and Peace Task Force, BPW continues to transform empowerment into harmony and equality into sustainable peace.

**20.** BPW International reaffirms its commitment to the principles of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on *Women, Peace and Security*, and to the subsequent resolutions that expand this agenda. BPW recognizes that women's equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction, and decision-making is essential to achieving sustainable peace and security. Through its global network and the BPW International Task Force for Peace,

BPW works to advance these goals by empowering women as leaders, negotiators, and builders of peace within their communities and across borders.

21. With nearly one hundred years of continuous service uniting business and professional women around the world—and as one of the organizations that helped shape the United Nations itself—BPW International remains steadfast in its mission: to empower women economically, prepare them for leadership and dismantle structural and legal barriers that deny justice, equality and peace.

BPW International  
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