

Statement by H.E. Ms. Paula Narváez  
President of ECOSOC  
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*Empowering women and girls and promoting gender equality: Endorsement and uptake of the  
CFS Voluntary Guidelines on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in the  
context of food security and nutrition*

Distinguished representatives,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to reflect on the endorsement of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition.

Women and girls are central to achieving the SDGs, and yet our progress toward Goal 5 has been too slow. If crises continue to disrupt local and global food supply chains, agricultural productivity and food prices, close to one in four women and girls could be moderately or severely food insecure by 2030.<sup>1</sup> A further 236 million women and girls are projected to be pushed into food insecurity due to climate change.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, malnutrition of women and girls – including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and obesity – are causing disease and reducing life expectancy. Addressing gender gaps in agrifood systems can both reduce food insecurity and boost global GDP by nearly \$1 trillion.<sup>3</sup> Investment in women is an investment in sustainable development.

On the other hand, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, women represent half of the agricultural workforce in the least developed countries and over 40% in developing countries. However, available data indicates that only between 10 and 20% of all landowners are women. This is alarming since land rights are a key driver of women's economic autonomy. In addition to this, rural women are more likely than men to have temporary, part-time, and low-paying jobs.

Empowering women in the food and agriculture sector is not only a matter of social justice but also an economic imperative. The evidence is clear: when women are engaged in agriculture and have equal access to resources, they can significantly increase agricultural productivity. In some

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<sup>1</sup> [GenderSnapshot.pdf \(un.org\)](#) (p. 9)

<sup>2</sup> [GenderSnapshot.pdf \(un.org\)](#) (p.5)

<sup>3</sup> [GenderSnapshot.pdf \(un.org\)](#) (p.5)

regions, if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%, lifting millions out of hunger. Moreover, women tend to reinvest a higher proportion of their earnings back into their families and communities, amplifying the positive impact of empowering women.

Excellencies,

The voluntary guidelines that you will adopt today give us a path forward to enact concrete policies on food and agriculture that put gender perspectives at the forefront of our efforts. They reflect on lessons learned on gender-responsive public policies, programmes and innovative solutions. The guidelines spotlight the need to address the root causes of gender inequalities including through legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, national plans, partnerships and investment. They remind us that supporting the rights and empowerment of all women and girls is also one of the most effective ways to improve food security and nutrition outcomes for all.

However, guidelines can only do so much on their own. All of us, Member States, civil society, the private sector and all other stakeholders, must do their part to implement inclusive and gender-responsive food, agriculture and nutrition policies that are mutually supportive and responsive to the complex and challenging global crises.

The empowerment of women in the agrifood sector not only yields economic benefits but also contributes to long-term sustainable development. It involves addressing deep-seated issues such as discriminatory legal frameworks, unequal access to resources, and social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. By closing these gender gaps, we can create a more equitable, resilient, and prosperous world.

As President of the Economic and Social Council, I have made the promotion of mainstreaming gender equality a priority, focusing on the multiplier effect of the empowerment of women and girls. Another priority is directing attention to the food crises and strengthening agricultural development as a frontline humanitarian response. I look forward to engaging you all in the work of ECOSOC this year, toward the implementation of these guidelines. You have my full support.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Halfway into implementation of the SDGs, our women and girls cannot wait any longer for gender equality to become a reality. Let the adoption of these guidelines today serve as a renewed commitment to mainstreaming gender equality and achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Thank you once again for the invitation to join you here at the CFS.