



International Council of Women Conseil International des Femmes

Paris, February 16th, 2026

Statement of the International Council of Women to mark 2026 International Women's Day

RIGHTS. JUSTICE. ACTION. FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

The International Council of Women (ICW-CIF), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, has been committed to advancing equal rights and the empowerment of women since its establishment in 1888. ICW-CIF strongly upholds that the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are critical to facilitating progress toward sustainable development for the world.

Aligning with the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations' adopted theme for 2026 International Women's Day calls for **ACTION** to dismantle the structural barriers to equal justice: discriminatory laws, weak legal protections, harmful practices and social norms that erode the rights of women and girls. Unfortunately, in too many countries, women and girls still continue to face, as claimants, victims, witnesses or offenders, the serious barriers to obtaining justice due to gender bias stereotypes, stigma, indifference, corruption and impunity.

On this International Women's Day, ICW-CIF stands firm in its commitment to advance **rights**, demand **justice**, and mobilize **action**. It joins women and girls across the globe in reaffirming a simple but urgent truth: **women's rights are human rights, justice is non-negotiable, and action can no longer be delayed.**

Within its global network of National Councils, ICW-CIF provides a unified voice, from the grassroots to the regional and international levels, in advocating for the adoption of **gender-responsive laws**, as well as for the establishment of equitable justice systems, keeping in mind that despite decades of progress, in many parts of the globe women continue to encounter systemic discrimination in education, employment, health care, gender-based violence, and remain under-represented in governance and decision-making.

ICW-CIF strongly believes that equality is not just a goal, but a **force for transformation** and for a more **just society**. It will continue to inspire, advocate, empower, and advocate that women's and girl's rights, and access to justice, must be at the center of global efforts for gender equality.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN (ICW-CIF)

Founded in 1888

NGO with General Consultative Status at ECOSOC (United Nations)

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Therefore, as a worldwide network of National Councils, ICW-CIF calls for:

- The full implementation of international human rights commitments, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Equal access to justice, education, health and economic opportunities for all women and girls
- Zero tolerance for gender-based violence and impunity
- Stronger support for women's leadership and participation in governance and sustainable development

It is appropriate here to remember the famous words of Gloria Steinem, a world-renowned feminist, journalist and activist, who notably said: *“The story of women’s struggle for equality doesn’t belong to any single feminist, nor to any one organization, but to the **collective efforts** of all who care about human rights”.*

Consequently, **ACTION** is the responsibility of governments, civil society, international institutions and the private sector alike. Commitments must be translated into policies, resources and measurable outcomes. Women's organizations must be recognized as essential partners, adequately funded, and meaningfully included in decision-making processes – locally, nationally and globally.

The International Council of Women joins UNWOMEN on its call “to drive lasting change, with its focus on ending discriminatory laws and strengthening access to justice worldwide, turning global promises into real progress, ensuring dignity, equality and justice for every woman and girl”.

To all the stakeholders, let's act together to fight for **RIGHTS** and **JUSTICE** by giving women a voice, by raising awareness, and by emphasizing the power of reciprocity and support to achieve advancement and equality for women and girls.

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