

LAGOS MODEL UNITED NATIONS (LMUN) 2020

21-25 September 2020

Documentation of the Work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

Committee Staff

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Agenda

- I. Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma
- II. Digital Technology and Sexual Violence

Resolutions Adopted by the Committee

Code	Topic	Vote
UNW 1/1	Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma	Vote by roll call, 13 votes in favour, none against
UNW 1/2	Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma	Vote by roll call, 13 votes in favour, none against

Summary Report

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment held its annual session to consider the following agenda systems;

- I. Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma
- II. Digital Technology and Sexual Violence

The session was attended by 15 Member States. On Monday, the committee adopted the agenda of I. and II, beginning discussion on the topic of Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma.

By Tuesday, The Dias received a total of 12 proposals covering a wide range of subtopics ranging from the use of laws to protect transgender individuals from violence while accessing water and sanitary products; partnership with the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization to distribute dignity kits to people who menstruate in crisis areas; the revision of work-based policies by ministries or departments related to employment in Member States to include menstruating and menopausal women; and providing alternative work options for employees who are managing their period.

On Wednesday, the leadership sessions, Idea Fair and Sustainable Development Goals Workshop held with the delegates' utmost participation. On Thursday, as discussions progressed, delegates began to rework and merge their working papers for coherence and collaboration. The Periodt bloc and La Regla Bloc were merged to form the Periodt bloc. The Red Sea bloc still stood alone. The delegates had many deadlines to improve the workability of the solutions. The committee adopted two resolutions, both of which received support by all delegates. The resolutions represented a range of issues including suggestions of a collaborative effort of private organizations, professionals and NGOs dedicated to the cause of period poverty, to create ecological, reusable and standard sanitary menstrual materials. As well as the introduction of training programs for local women, they also called upon Member States to expand international cooperation by combining technological experts of various Member States in developing application software using Artificial Intelligence where people, irrespective of gender can access professional advice and have their questions answered on menstrual health from the comfort of their homes with guaranteed confidentiality.

The overall work of the body throughout the week was cooperative and delegates worked as a cohesive body to build consensus and renew momentum around addressing the urgent issues of period poverty of stigma.

Code: UNW 1/1

Committee: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Topic: Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the United Nations provided for in the Charter of the United Nations (1945),

Recognizing the Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/39/8 on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) (2018), which calls upon states to “address the widespread stigma and shame surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene by ensuring access to factual information thereon, addressing the negative social norms around the issue and ensuring universal access to hygienic products and gender-sensitive facilities, including disposal options for menstrual products”,

Further recalling the General Assembly Third Committee Resolution A/C.3/74/L.33/Rev.1 adopted in November 2019, which states that the lack of access to adequate water and sanitation services, especially for menstrual hygiene management, especially in schools, workplaces, health centres and public facilities, negatively affects gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their enjoyment of human rights,

Reaffirming the central role that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development plays, as the United Nations’ focal point for science, technology and innovation for development, in analyzing how science, technology and innovation, including information and communication technologies, serve as enablers of the 2030 Agenda by acting as a forum for strategic planning, sharing lessons learned and best practices, providing foresight about critical trends in science, technology and innovation in key sectors of the economy, the environment and society, and drawing attention to emerging and disruptive technologies,

Taking into consideration the emotional, cognitive and physiological well-being of menstruating and menopausal women in work environments such as monthly physiological and hormonal changes,

Alarmed by research by the United Kingdom climate group action, Friends of the Earth, which revealed that a year's worth of a menstrual product impacts on the climate with a carbon footprint of 5.3kg CO₂ equivalent, and that sanitary pads, tampons and plastic applicators contribute largely to plastic pollution as pads are made of 90% plastic and take hundreds of years to biodegrade,

Expressing concern that there is limited provision of menstrual hygiene products to women in prison, having to reuse pads, emphasizing that poor menstrual hygiene can lead to health problems such as, fungal or bacterial infections of the reproductive tract and the urinary tract, irritation of the skin which causes discomfort and can result in dermatitis and a higher risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome as outlined by the Bulletin of World Health Organization 2011,

Deeply conscious of the current disparities in the involvement and level of knowledge of boys and men regarding matters of MHM while emphasizing WaterAid’s post-2015 vision stating that “in any post-2015 framework, decision-makers must address the persisting inequalities between women and men, embracing the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination to ensure universal access to water and sanitation for all women and girls everywhere”,

Reaffirming the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including those related to water resources, contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and determined to achieve the goal of ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all and other related goals and targets,

Recalling the resolution 71/222 adopted by the General Assembly on the 21st of December 2016, by which the period 2018 – 2028 was named the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”,

Deeply disturbed of the main burden of collecting household water and caregiving including management of those with waterborne diseases in many parts of the world which rests solidly on the shoulders of women, thereby restricting their time for other activities, such as education and leisure, or for earning a livelihood,

Noting with satisfaction the effort of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in quelling the widespread silence and stigma surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene,

Deeply concerned that women and girls often face humanitarian emergencies and crises, especially in times of armed conflict or natural disaster which causes inadequate access to clean water, sanitation, and menstrual hygiene products, especially in refugee camps,

Noting with deep concern that transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people face possible physical, verbal and emotional abuse/violence while accessing menstrual hygiene products and water facilities,

Recalling the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966), the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1966), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989), the Commission on the Status of Women (1946), the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979) the United Nations Human Rights Council (2006),

1. *Recommends* embarking on a social media campaign, ‘#PERIODNOTDISEASE’ by seeking voluntary participation from youths of each Member State to debunk taboos surrounding menstruation and educate the public on menstrual hygiene, with backings from individual Member States to further support the movement;
2. *Requesting* the compulsory provision of menstrual hygiene products and WASH facilities in work environments (formal or informal), schools, recreational centres, public facilities and prisons through;
 - a. A policy to be adopted and implemented to address the standardization of WASH facilities and restrooms in schools and workplaces, which should include basic materials for menstrual hygiene, which would be a standard of approval for schools and workplaces
 - b. The financial responsibility would rest solely on the organizations, whether private or public;
 - c. Teaching school boys and girls to make reusable sanitary pads by skilled personnel in Non-Governmental Organizations, with locally available resources and reselling at reduced costs within their communities to help keep girls in school;

3. *Calls upon* Member States to expand international cooperation by combining technological expertise of Member States in developing an application software named “That’s on Period”, using Artificial Intelligence where people, irrespective of their gender can access professional advice and have their questions answered on menstrual health from the comfort of their homes with guaranteed confidentiality;
 - a. Calls upon willing and able Member States and private donors to fund the projects above,
 - b. Suggests the collaboration of World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), WHO and UNESCO for the development of the above application software;
4. *Further recommends* the revision of work-based policies by ministries or departments related to employment in Member States to include menstruating and menopausal women by:
 - a. Educating employers and employees about menstruation and highlighting certain actions and comments that can be labelled as stigmatization;
 - b. Providing alternative work options for employees who are managing their period, such as:
 - (i) reduced workload/work time;
 - (ii) breaks from work whenever necessary;
 - (iii) permission to work from home;
 - (iv) paid leave for up to three days every month for those who are unable to work as a result of menstruation or menopause, without a necessary letter from healthcare professionals;
 - c. Disciplinary actions to be taken by the human resources department towards perpetrators of workplace harassment and discrimination related to menstruation and encouraging employees to come forward with such complaints;
5. *Calls upon* Member States to intercept the contribution of sanitary pads and tampons to plastic pollution, hence;
 - a. Suggests that Member States migrate to the use of eco-friendly products such as: organic cotton reusable pads, 100% organic tampons with plant-based applicators, reusable discs and menstrual cups;
 - b. Suggests that education on menstrual hygiene management should include knowledge on eco-friendly hygiene materials and how to use them;
 - c. Encourages the use of media platforms by manufacturers and advocates to disseminate information on the importance of adoption of eco-friendly materials by the population;
 - d. Suggests the revision of teaching modules in schools of each Member State to include the importance of the use of eco-friendly sanitary materials;

e. Recommends access to WASH facilities as clean water is needed to care for and wash reusable pads and menstrual cups;

f. Further suggests a partnership between Non-Governmental Organizations and Member States in distributing eco-friendly sanitary products in schools by engaging the services of youth volunteers;

i. This project would be jointly funded by Member States to enable girls get familiarized with these products and hence facilitate the easy switch to the use of eco-friendly products;

ii. While distribution is ongoing, strategic campaigns would take place simultaneously where adverse effects of plastic pollution via the use of non-organic and non-reusable products are highlighted and the short and long-term importance of adopting eco-friendly products would be emphasized;

g. Further recommends that the governments of Member States should encourage Manufacturers to produce and circulate more eco-friendly materials via tax incentives where there would be a reduction or total removal of Sales and Value Added Tax on these materials, monetary policies that regulate the prices, and also, use of locally recycled materials which ultimately makes them more affordable to the consumers;

6. *Encourages* the standard treatment of female prisoners in the area of MHM, ensuring the compulsory provision of menstrual hygiene products and WASH facilities for all inmates;

a. Recommends that Member States improve the welfare of female prisoners as it relates to menstrual hygiene management;

b. Suggests that the funding of hygiene materials for prisoners be included in the national budget;

c. Further suggests the training of prison staff working and women prisoners by health experts to raise awareness in the area of MHM;

7. *Affirms* the importance of the roles of boys and men in achieving gender equality as it pertains to MHM;

8. *Calls upon* holistic male participation in period and sex education via;

a. Engaging school teachers and community leaders in educating boys and men in schools and religious places about MHM to mitigate stigma and correct wrong practices, as this would enhance their involvement in household contributions to menstrual hygiene;

b. Creation of safe spaces for open dialogues about periods and period-related issues thereby eliminating stigma;

c. Sensitization of men on WASH facilities as they play key roles in decisions on investment thereby enhancing their participation in MHM;

9. *Recommends* collaboration of all United Nations Member States and stakeholders with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), who are responsible for Camp Coordination, Camp Management (CCCM), towards providing quantity and quality facilities for healthy and safe water, adequate sanitation, waste disposal and hygiene in order to ensure refugee women's privacy and security through:

- a. Construction of separate toilet facilities for men and women;
- b. Ensuring that the toilets are well lit and have lockable doors to reduce the risk of assault;
- c. Provision of reusable pads, the knowledge and resources to make them and supplementary WASH facilities needed to clean them including clothing lines;

10. *Further invites* Member States and Stakeholders on MHM to ameliorate stigmatization and violence faced by transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming persons through Menstrual Equity;

- a. Calls upon institutions, organizations and public facilities to provide menstrual hygiene products, waste bins and WASH facilities in men's bathrooms;
- b. Emphasizes that privacy and protection should be maintained in toilet facilities by ensuring the doors have locks and the toilets are properly lit;
- c. Further recommends that advocacy to mitigate period poverty and stigma should include campaigns against stigmatization and violence faced by transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people.

Code: UNW 1/2

Committee: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Topic: Addressing Period Poverty and Stigma

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,

Noting with satisfaction Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) which states that all Member States must take all appropriate measures and pursue policies denouncing discrimination against women,

Reaffirming Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 which states that all countries must promote gender equality and women empowerment and it serves as a means to the eradication of period poverty,

Applauding Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) which recognizes the right of everyone to free education

Recognizing the progressive introduction of free education as an indispensable means of realizing other human rights, such as freedom of speech and expression and association,

Acknowledging the statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed, who notably stated that “it’s time for women and girls to speak about their periods”,

Noting with deep concern, a report given by the United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 2018 that, only 27% of the population of least developed countries (LDCs) have access to basic sanitation services in their homes, such as handwashing facilities and clean water,

Reaffirming Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 which states that all countries must promote gender equality and women empowerment,

Emphasizing Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) which imposes a duty on all Member States “to take necessary steps to maximize its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures”,

Deeply concerned with the horrors of period poverty on the lives of women and girls subjected to it and the accomplishment of SDG 5 and affirming the need to ensure Menstrual Equity for all,

Bearing in mind Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966) which states the right of everyone, regardless of sex, religion, race, colour, language or social origin, to not be subjected to torture or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment,

Recognizing the role of technological developments, media and communications in changing the narrative at the discourse surrounding period poverty and deconstruction of cultural stigma,

Affirming the need to ensure that in providing menstrual equity for all, all persons who menstruate must be included, regardless of their gender,

Deeply concerned about the heightened effects of period poverty on women and young girls with disabilities,

Deeply disturbed by the vulnerable women and girls exposed to period poverty in conflict situations,

Recognizing the international humanitarian coordination system by the General Assembly resolution 46/182 to ensure coordination in responding to humanitarian crises,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to take the necessary legislative actions to create awareness on the inhumane and degrading treatment women are subjected to as a result of period poverty and stigma and to take measures that promote gender equality and women empowerment, in accordance with *Article 2 of CEDAW* through;

- a. Creation of awareness by creating jingles and infomercials using shared stories of women that have suffered discrimination due to period poverty or have faced stigmatization;
- b. Elimination of laws and declarations that subjugate women to inhumane and degrading treatment;
- c. Appealing to the necessary government institutions to make the law-making space more gender-inclusive and also create awareness to encourage more women to take up space in the law-making environment;

2. *Encourages* a collaborative effort of private organizations, professionals and NGOs dedicated to the cause of period poverty, to create ecological, reusable and standard sanitary menstrual materials, as well as the introduction of training programs for local women, on how to maximize their country's available resources for the production of these menstrual products, to improve the hygiene and skills of women in the local polity;

- a. As part of the training scheme, the private individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations would establish a quality control unit
- b. The duty of this unit would be to ensure that the standards of the sanitary pads and mild soaps are up to hygienic standards for public use;
- c. These private individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations would serve as the regulatory body for this training scheme;
- d. To fund this training scheme, donations would be solicited from private companies, private individuals, multinational corporations and the government within the state, as

well as, funds sought from international organizations and other Member States with active foreign aid available;

- e. The training may also be funded by the Central Emergency Fund;
 - f. Free sanitary pads and other menstrual materials would be made available in schools and workplaces with funds requested from the government, private companies, private individuals, multinational corporations and other Member States with available foreign aid;
 - g. This would drastically improve the availability of menstrual materials for women all over the world;
 - h. Low-income women would be trained in Sexual Reproductive Health Management Centers to package sanitary products and dignity kits thus, creating employment;
 - i. This training would be covered by Member States in collaboration with NGOs;
3. *Emphasizes* the importance of educating girls and boys on menstruation and sex education, with the aim of eliminating the stigma associated with periods;
- a. Sex education should be taught in rural primary and secondary educational institutions, in order to tackle the stigma associated with menstruation;
 - b. In Member States, books on menstruation such as: ‘Flow: The Cultural Story of Menstruation’ by Elissa Stein and Susan Kim, ‘Menstruation Und Weibliche Initiationsriten’ by Caroline Ausserer, ‘Periodo: Guia de una Joven’ by Loulan, Joann and Worthen and the Swedish book “It’s Only Blood” by Anna Dahlqvist should be made a compulsory part of the school curriculum of Member States;
 - c. This means that students will have to read and study these books, as they would form part of the questions in the Member State’s entrance examinations, for instance, the SATs or WAEC;
 - d. Benefits such as national recognition, endorsement of such schools and funding the training of teachers on Menstrual Health Management would be provided for the schools who successfully take it up;
 - e. In rural parts of Member States, sensitization programs would be organized quarterly, with the target being women and girls of all age groups;
 - f. NGOs dedicated to the cause of period poverty and charity organizations would administer small books clubs in local villages, with not more than 10 - 20 girls and women per group;
 - g. Through this medium, they would give out free books to the community and educate women and girls about their menstrual cycles, as well as teach them how to read;

- h. Member States are to implement monthly seminars and sensitization programs on menstruation for parents, organized and executed by Non-Governmental Organizations, to better equip parents on how to handle children's menstrual cycles and drastically reduce period poverty;
- i. A house-to-house education scheme regulated by the government, in collaboration with charities dedicated to the cause of women empowerment, should be implemented;

4. *Ensures* all public institutions and schools through the Ministry of Health and Education have sanitary products, access to clean water and sanitary disposals, provided at no cost;

- a. Member States would allocate funds to public schools, provide sanitation facilities and encourage a progress report system, which would hold biannually for accountability purposes;
- b. Further recommends the provision of mobile health and sanitation facilities for homeless and low-income women
- c. Member States should encourage the participation of youth leaders in rural communities by organising donation drives to make the mobile menstrual health and hygiene facilities possible;

5. *Recalls* a reduction in tax levied against menstruation materials, such as pads, tampons, menstrual cups and so on, in order to promote gender equality and women empowerment considering that the tax is a source of revenue for some Member States;

- a. Tampons should be subsidized in order to enable access to menstrual materials to the public;
- b. Social media can also be employed to raise awareness on this issue and garner support for the subsidization of taxes on menstrual products;
- c. Beyond taxation, imploring Member States to create a "Period Allowance" policy for low-income women and girls to receive free sanitary products;

6. *Urges* collaboration between United Nations and Member States in supporting NGOs to make documentaries and short films that not only highlight the dangers of period poverty, but also aid research and sensitize people on what should be done;

- a. Implores NGOs to leverage social media on effectively creating a social media campaign tagged "The Clean Flow Campaign" on specific days and similar to the 16 Days of Activism;
- b. The campaign would entail sharing materials, posts on period poverty and stigma and also organizing donation drives stirred towards the distribution of pain killers and sanitary products for free;

- c. The use of hashtags such as: #periodpositivity, #normalizeperiods, #thecleanflowcampaign or #periodpoverty and some local language hashtags such as: #adetdönemiyoksulluğu in Turkish or #kuukautistenpositiivisuus in Finnish can be a powerful means in raising awareness about this global issue;
- d. Jingles and Commercials funded by the Ministry of Health and Women Affairs or its equivalent in Member States would be made to spread awareness on the campaign;
- e. Videos can be used as a medium to teach women and girls how to make reusable pads;
- f. These videos would be made in local languages and with the easiest comprehensible step by step guide;
- g. To reach the most people in the communities, gender-appropriate videos would be displayed on billboards and televisions in the local polity;

7. *Recommends* creating gender-neutral restrooms and ensuring the provision of sanitary products in gender-neutral, female and male restrooms as well as ensure that menstrual health personnel are adequately trained on handling menstrual health issues for transgender and non-conforming persons;

- a. Funds for this initiative will be sought majorly by donations from the government, private individuals, private companies, multinational corporations and Member States;
- b. Training of personnel may be handled by skilled volunteers from the WHO;

8. Calls on Member States to pay special attention to women and girls with disabilities by building sanitation facilities with accessible terrain and implores Member States to make policies and set mechanisms to ensure that this is carried out;

9. *Requests* Member States in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund to provide dignity kits and relief materials for women in conflict areas and refugees in concentration camps;

- a. The Central Emergency Fund would be used in providing constant access to clean water and sanitation facilities;
- b. Advocating for a UN Cluster that centers on tackling period poverty and distribution of dignity kits in conflict areas;
- c. Calls on a collaboration between UNFPA and WASH to provide clean water and sanitary disposal systems to these women as it is key to sustaining life and maintaining health;
- d. The Cluster will be at the forefront, partnering with government authorities to ensure the protection of Internally Displaced Persons.