

CSW 2017 Agreed Conclusions: U.S. STATEMENT
March 24, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

-- The United States thanks our facilitator Egypt, all participating delegations, civil society partners, and the untiring staff of UN Women on their diligent efforts toward developing a substantive, action-oriented set of Agreed Conclusions that were able to be adopted by consensus.

-- While we are not a CSW member this year, we engaged constructively in the negotiations because the topics of women's economic empowerment and women in the workplace are of high importance to the United States. We would like to outline our views on certain portions of the text.

-- The United States understands the intention of inclusion of "equal pay for equal work and work of equal value" to promote pay equity between men and women, and accepts the formulation on that basis. The United States implements it by observing the principle of "equal pay for equal work."

-- We recognize the importance of unpaid care work and have released periodic time-use surveys and estimates of the monetary value of unpaid work, but do not factor the value of unpaid work into our core national accounts, including GDP.

-- On a gender-responsive approach to public financial management, not all countries take this approach in shaping public expenditures. We recognize that in cases when it has been applied, there is potential for beneficial results for women and girls.

-- The United States would like to underscore the critical importance of the ILO's 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work to women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. The Declaration represents the solemn commitment of all ILO member States to respect, promote, and realize workplace principles and rights in the areas of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; effective abolition of child labor; and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

-- With respect to "temporary special measures," the U.S. position is that each country must determine for itself whether they are appropriate. The best way to improve the situation of women and girls is often through legal and policy reforms that end discrimination against women and promote equality of opportunity.

-- We regret that the final text does not mention some of the groups most vulnerable to discrimination like those discriminated against based on sexual orientation and gender identity, race, color, or religion or belief. We are, however, pleased to see that the text includes language about the establishing or strengthening of social protection systems "without discrimination of any kind."

-- The United States views sexual harassment as a form of employment discrimination that may amount to gender-based violence in the form of sexual assault, although most sexual harassment does not rise to the level of sexual assault. U.S. law recognized that sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination.

-- We recognize that sexual harassment can occur not only in the workplace, but in work-related situations and in digital and online spaces, and that women, girls, men, and boys can be targeted.

-- The United States believes that women should have equal access to reproductive health care. We remain committed to the commitments laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Program of Action. As has

been made clear over many years, there was international consensus that the Beijing documents do not create new international rights, including any "right" to abortion. The U.S. fully supports the principle of voluntary choice regarding maternal and child health and family planning. We do not recognize abortion as a method of family planning, nor do we support abortion in our reproductive health assistance. Let me reiterate that the U.S. is the largest donor of bilateral reproductive health and family planning assistance.-- Pending review of U.S. policies relating to climate change and the Paris Agreement, the United States reserves its position on language in paragraph 23 of these Agreed Conclusions relating to these issues.

-- The United States does not support the Agreed Conclusion's references to technology transfer.

-- The United States views unilateral and multilateral sanctions as legitimate means to attain foreign policy, security, and other national and international objectives. Sanctions regimes are consistent with the UN Charter and international law, and are an alternative to the use of force. We disagree that sanctions adversely affect civilians or lead to humanitarian crises.

-- On illicit financial flows, we would like to point out that this term has no agreed upon international meaning. Our preference is to focus on the underlying illegal activities that constitute illicit financial flows, such as bribery, tax evasion, money laundering, and other corrupt practices. We support taking concrete actions to combat these illegal activities, and have actively participated in many multilateral processes addressing these issues, including the UN Convention Against Corruption. Discussions of these topics are best left to technical experts with the appropriate expertise and mandate to address these issues. We believe it is not appropriate to consider illicit financial flows in the CSW.

-- Our views about the "right to development," which lacks an internationally accepted definition, are long-standing and well-known. Further work is needed to make it consistent with human rights, which the international community recognizes as universal rights held and enjoyed by individuals, and which every individual may demand from his or her government.

-- The United States joins consensus on these Agreed Conclusions with the understanding that its provisions do not imply that States must become parties to instruments to which they are not a party, or implement obligations under such instruments without first becoming a party. For example, the United States is not a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Accordingly, we interpret this document's references to rights under that Convention to be limited to States Parties to that covenant, in light of its Article 2(1).

-- We also underscore that these Agreed Conclusions do not change or necessarily reflect the United States' or other States' obligations under treaty or customary international law.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and we ask that this statement be made part of the official records of these proceedings.