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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/66/455 and Corr.1)]

66/129. Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 56/129 of 19 December 2001, 58/146 of 22 December 2003, 60/138 of 16 December 2005, 62/136 of 18 December 2007 and 64/140 of 18 December 2009,

Welcoming the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to consider the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges as its priority theme at its fifty-sixth session, in 2012,

Recognizing that rural women are critical agents in poverty reduction, that they are crucial to the achievement of food and nutritional security in poor and vulnerable households and to environmental sustainability and that, in other ways, they are also critical to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals, and concerned that rural women continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities, their limited or lack of access to land, water and other resources, their limited or lack of access to credit, extension services and agricultural inputs, their exclusion from planning and decision-making and their disproportionate burden of unpaid care work,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;¹

2. *Urges* Member States, in collaboration with the organizations of the United Nations and civil society, as appropriate, to continue their efforts to implement the outcome of and to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the relevant United Nations conferences and summits, including their reviews, and to attach greater importance to the improvement of the situation of rural women, including indigenous women, in their national, regional and global development strategies by, inter alia:

(a) Creating an enabling environment for improving the situation of rural women and ensuring systematic attention to their needs, priorities and contributions,

¹ A/66/181.



including through enhanced cooperation and a gender perspective, and their full participation in the development, implementation and follow-up of macroeconomic policies, including development policies and programmes and poverty eradication strategies, including poverty reduction strategy papers, where they exist, based on internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) Pursuing the political and socioeconomic empowerment of rural women and supporting their full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, including through affirmative action, where appropriate, and support for women's organizations, labour unions or other associations and civil society groups promoting rural women's rights;

(c) Promoting consultation with and the participation of rural women, including indigenous women and women with disabilities, through their organizations and networks, in the design, development and implementation of gender equality and rural development programmes and strategies;

(d) Ensuring that perspectives of rural women are taken into account and that they participate in the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of policies and activities related to emergencies, including natural disasters, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, and taking appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against rural women in this regard;

(e) Integrating a gender perspective into the design, implementation and evaluation of and follow-up to development policies and programmes, including budget policies, paying increased attention to the needs of rural women so as to ensure that they benefit from policies and programmes adopted in all spheres and that the disproportionate number of rural women living in poverty is reduced;

(f) Strengthening measures, including resource generation, to accelerate progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5 on improving maternal health by addressing the specific health needs of rural women and taking concrete measures to enhance and provide access to the highest attainable standards of health for women in rural areas, as well as quality, affordable and universally accessible primary health care and support services, including in such areas of sexual and reproductive health as prenatal and postnatal health care, emergency obstetric care, family planning information and increasing knowledge, awareness and support for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS;

(g) Promoting sustainable infrastructure, access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation and safe cooking and heating practices, to improve the health of rural women and children;

(h) Investing in and strengthening efforts to meet the basic needs of rural women, including needs relating to their food and nutritional security and that of their families, and to promote adequate standards of living for them as well as decent conditions for work and access to local, regional and global markets through improved availability, access to and use of critical rural infrastructure, such as energy and transport, science and technology, local services, capacity-building and human resources development measures and the provision of a safe and reliable water supply and sanitation, nutritional programmes, affordable housing programmes, education and literacy programmes, and health and social support measures, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care, including psychosocial aspects, and support services;

(i) Designing and implementing national policies that promote and protect the enjoyment by rural women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and creating an environment that does not tolerate violations or abuses of their rights, including domestic violence, sexual violence and all other forms of gender-based violence;

(j) Ensuring that the rights of older women in rural areas are taken into account with regard to their equal access to basic social services, appropriate social protection/social security measures, equal access to and control of economic resources, and empowerment of older women through access to financial and infrastructure services, with special focus on support to older women, including indigenous women, who often have access to few resources and are more vulnerable;

(k) Promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities in rural areas, including by ensuring access on an equal basis to productive employment and decent work, economic and financial resources and disability-sensitive infrastructure and services, in particular in relation to health and education, as well as by ensuring that their priorities and needs are fully incorporated into policies and programmes, inter alia, through their participation in decision-making processes;

(l) Developing specific assistance programmes and advisory services to promote economic skills of rural women in banking, modern trading and financial procedures, and providing microcredit and other financial and business services to a greater number of women in rural areas, in particular female heads of households, for their economic empowerment;

(m) Mobilizing resources, including at the national level and through official development assistance, for increasing women's access to existing savings and credit schemes, as well as targeted programmes that provide women with capital, knowledge and tools that enhance their economic capacities;

(n) Integrating increased employment opportunities for rural women into all international and national development strategies and poverty eradication strategies, including by, inter alia, expanding non-agricultural employment opportunities, improving working conditions and increasing access to productive resources;

(o) Investing in infrastructure and in time- and labour-saving technologies, especially in rural areas, benefiting women and girls by reducing their burden of domestic activities, affording the opportunity for girls to attend school and women to engage in self-employment or participate in the labour market;

(p) Taking steps towards ensuring that women's unpaid work and contributions to on-farm and off-farm production, including income generated in the informal sector, are recognized, and supporting remunerative non-agricultural employment of rural women, improving working conditions and increasing access to productive resources;

(q) Promoting programmes and services to enable rural women and men to reconcile their work and family responsibilities and to encourage men to share, equally with women, household, childcare and other care responsibilities;

(r) Developing strategies to decrease women's vulnerability to environmental factors while promoting rural women's role in protecting the environment;

(s) Considering the adoption, where appropriate, of national legislation to protect the knowledge, innovations and practices of women in indigenous and local communities relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies;

(t) Addressing the lack of timely, reliable and sex-disaggregated data, including by intensifying efforts to include women's unpaid work in official statistics, and developing a systematic and comparative research base on rural women that will inform policy and programme decisions;

(u) Strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices to collect, analyse and disseminate comparable sex-disaggregated data, including on time use, and gender statistics in rural areas to serve as a basis for gender-responsive policy design and strategy development in rural areas;

(v) Designing, revising and implementing laws to ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal rights to own and lease land and other property, including through the equal right to inheritance, and undertaking administrative reforms and all necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information, and to ensure equal access to justice and legal support;

(w) Supporting a gender-sensitive education system that considers the specific needs of rural women in order to eliminate gender stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies affecting them, including through community-based dialogue involving women and men, and girls and boys;

(x) Promoting education, training and relevant information programmes for rural and farming women through the use of affordable and appropriate technologies and the mass media;

(y) Developing the capacity of personnel working in the areas of national development strategies, rural development, agricultural development, poverty eradication and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to identify and address the challenges and constraints facing rural women, including through training programmes and the development and dissemination of methodologies and tools, while acknowledging technical assistance of relevant United Nations agencies;

3. *Strongly encourages* Member States, United Nations entities and all other relevant stakeholders to take measures to identify and address any negative impact of the current global crises on women in rural areas, including on legislation, policies and programmes that strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women;

4. *Requests* the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular those dealing with issues of development, to address and support the empowerment of rural women and their specific needs in their programmes and strategies;

5. *Stresses* the need to identify the best practices for ensuring that rural women have access to and full participation in the area of information and communications technology, to address the priorities and needs of rural women and girls as active users of information and to ensure their participation in developing and implementing global, regional and national information and communications technology strategies, taking appropriate educational measures to eliminate gender stereotypes regarding women in the field of technology;

6. *Calls upon* Member States to consider the concluding observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women concerning their reports to the Committee when formulating policies and designing programmes focused on the improvement of the situation of rural women, including those to be developed and implemented in cooperation with relevant international organizations;

7. *Invites* Governments to promote the economic empowerment of rural women, to adopt gender-responsive rural development strategies, including budget framework and relevant assessment measures, and to ensure that the needs and priorities of rural women and girls are systematically addressed and that they can effectively contribute to poverty alleviation, hunger eradication and food and nutritional security;

8. *Encourages* Governments and international organizations to integrate the perspective of women in rural areas, including indigenous women, into the preparations for and outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, with a view to accelerating progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas;

9. *Invites* Governments, relevant international organizations and the specialized agencies to continue to observe the International Day of Rural Women annually, on 15 October, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/136;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

*89th plenary meeting
19 December 2011*