



Victoria Atkins MP  
Minister for Women  
Government Equalities Office

Women's Resource Centre  
United House  
North Road  
London  
N7 9DP

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019

Emailed to: Shelly Dowrich, Charles Ramsden, Elysia McCaffrey, Holly Dustin

Dear Minister,

### **CEDAW Implementation**

We are writing regarding the UN's recent review of the UK's performance on improving the position of women in the UK and the progress made in achieving their rights. As you know, the UN Committee responsible for assessing compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women has published its concluding observations with a comprehensive set of recommendations, on how the UK and devolved governments can improve and protect women's rights.

UK Women's Human Rights NGOs have been critically involved in this process, many for over 12 months; leading on and attending consultations and producing nation shadow reports and a UK wide shadow report. Many also attended the examination of the UK government by the committee in February 2019. Collectively we provided a broad range of evidence gathered predominantly from grassroots women's organisations and their service users. We are very pleased that the UN listened to our representations; indeed commending us on our excellent collaborative approach, and that the resultant recommendations represent a carefully considered view of where further progress is needed, based on the written and oral evidence that we presented.

The recommendations reflect the breadth and complexity of the challenge ahead in achieving better progress on women's rights, and we are mindful that such a task is not the responsibility of Government alone; indeed, our Women's Rights NGO sector is a crucial partner in delivering on this progress.

The Committee's recommendations and our own shadow reports offer various policy solutions. The Committee highlighted a number of cross-cutting themes, which we believe are pivotal for the government to address in order to make progress:

- The uncertainty arising from the UK's withdrawal from the European Union will impact upon a range of public policy areas. We would like to see Impact Assessments conducted to understand what that means for women to ensure that there is no regression in their human rights.
- We urge the Government to adopt an intersectional approach to Women's Rights which includes the gathering of data to ensure all women, and disabled and BME women in particular, have their rights upheld.
- We also urge the Government to incorporate CEDAW into domestic law and create a national mechanism to ensure women's concerns are sought and to oversee CEDAW implementation.

The Women and Equalities Select Committee has also supported the introduction of a strategy for implementing CEDAW, and the development of a monitoring mechanism, underpinned by consultation with NGOs and NHRIs.

We note the Government Equalities Office's move to the Cabinet Office, which provides an excellent opportunity for GEO to lead progress on CEDAW across all of Government. We also look forward to publication, in due course, of your revised strategy on women's economic empowerment in England, and very much welcome the Secretary of State's intention to create a new national listening platform, to bring the voices of diverse women into the national debate. We would strongly encourage the Government to use the recent CEDAW review and its Concluding Observations as a basis for its overall strategy on women's rights.

We would welcome a meeting to discuss the committee's recommendations and in particular the key overarching issues noted above, and to hear about the UK Government's plans to effectively implement the recommendations for the benefit of all women in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,

Vivienne Hayes MBE, CEO, WRC

Bee Rowlatt, Chair, Mary on the Green

Catherine Anderson, CEO, Jo Cox Foundation

Catherine Fookes, Director, Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales

Chiara Capraro, Amnesty International UK

Cris McCurley, Partner, Ben Hoare Bell LLP

Davina Lloyd, Back to 60

Dr Fenella Porter, Interim Deputy Director, Women's Rights and Gender Justice, OXFAM

Dr Helen Pankhurst, Convener, Centenary Action Group

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Director, UK Women's Budget Group

Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, Founder & Editor, Women in Leadership Publication  
Eleanor Lisney, Sisters of Frida  
Elizabeth Law, N.I.W.E.P  
Ellen Grogan, Nordic Model Now  
Emma Ritch, ED, Engender  
Evelyn Fraser, Development Manager, Scottish Women's Convention  
Harriet Wistrich, Director, Centre for Women's Justice  
Jane Gordon, Legal Director, Sisters for Change  
Kellie Turtle, Women's Resource and Development Agency  
Lee Chalmers, Director, The Parliament Project  
Liz Dominey, Chair, UK Programme Action Committee of Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland  
Mandu Reid, Leader of the Women's Equality Party  
Marta Welander, Refugee Rights Europe  
Mary Santo, Policy Advisor, Mothers Union  
Maureen Meatcher, President, National Board of Catholic Women.  
Melissa Green, General Secretary, The WI (National Federation of Women's Institutes)  
Nick Newland FRSA FHEA, Policy and Communications Manager, Associated Country Women of the World  
Ros Bragg Director, Maternity Action  
Sarah Taal, Baobab Women's Project  
Seyi Akiwowo, Founder and Executive Director, Glitch!  
Shaista Gohir OBE, Interim Executive Director, Muslim Women's Network UK  
Sister Lynda Dearlove RSM MBE, CEO Women@the well  
Umme Iman, ED, Angelou Centre  
Zarin Hainsworth, Chair NAWO, Widows Rights International