

**Statement submitted by Equality Now, Musawah, Women’s Learning Partnership, FEMNET, Muslims for Progressive Values, and ACT Alliance to the 2020 Economic and Social Council High Level Segment: *“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”***

Equality in Family Law - Action and Transformation

The Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law calls on all member states to ensure equality for women and men under the law in all matters relating to the family, regardless of religion, culture and tradition. The Coordination Committee of the Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law is comprised of Act Church of Sweden, Equality Now, The Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights (CLADEM), Musawah, Muslims for Progressive Values, Solidarity for African Women’s Rights network (SOAWR) represented by African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Women’s Learning Partnership and UN Women.

Ending discrimination in family law constitutes “an accelerated action and transformative pathway”, the theme of the 2020 High Level Segment. This is essential to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment. SDG Indicator 5.1.1 specifically identifies family law as one of the four legal frameworks that must be reformed to accelerate progress to achieve gender equality and to meet Target 5.1 (“End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere”).

World Bank data shows that many countries ranked at the bottom of the index for legal equality have family laws that explicitly discriminate against women and girls. Further, a recent comprehensive cross-country study drew the conclusion that “egalitarian reform of family law may be the most crucial precondition for empowering women economically”. In current times, family laws that discriminate on the basis of gender are also exacerbating the hardships caused by the COVID-19 and gendered impact of the outbreak on women and girls.

The principle of universality of human rights with regard to equality in the family should apply to all groups of women and girls, no matter their religion, custom or tradition. Governments must amend Constitutions that provide for exceptions to guarantees of equality and non-discrimination. Laws that allow for discrimination against women on the basis of religion and customs, not least family laws, must be reformed to uphold equality and justice.

As the international community marks SDG +5, governments can no longer sanction and perpetuate discrimination within the family, no matter what form it takes or the origin of the law or practice. We therefore call upon member states to accelerate efforts to repeal or amend all sex discriminatory family laws as soon as possible, and no later than 2030.