

## International Organizations and Gender

### Author Details:

**Leke OKE, PhD**-Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

### Abstract

*This paper explores the nexus between the International Organizations and Gender. It is within the purview of the paper that the International Organizations are the conduit pipes through which the global democratic agenda of gender and women empowerment flow. Utilizing secondary sources of data, the paper avers that International Organizations are pivotal to Gender and women empowerment generally as they are involved in mobilizing public support, monitoring the effectiveness of international aid and providing information and expertise towards gender equity and equality. The paper concludes that International Organizations, especially the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.), because of their universal spread and influence, have indeed become the channel through which the global developmental agenda is pursued and spread and have thus become important actors and partners in development*

**Key Words:** *International Organizations, Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Inequality, Empowerment, and Development.*

### Introduction

As part of the democratization, globalization and development agenda going on across the world, the clamour has been for the empowerment of women and their inclusion in societal administration on an equal basis with their male counterparts. Thus all over the world today, the quest by most stakeholders – governments, policymakers, women leaders, women organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. - has been for gender-sensitive policies such that would guarantee equal representation of men and women in government and administration as well as societal issues generally. International Organizations particularly, that global body; the United Nations Organization (U.N.O) has become the rallying point in achieving the global agenda for women and turning around their situation/condition for better. To this end, most countries have become signatories to many international agreements which are intended to boost the status of women and empower them in all spheres of life.

The declaration of 1975-85 as the decade for women by the United Nations and the decision to proclaim 1975 the International Women's Year clearly reveal the potent role(s) of the UN in gender/women development and empowerment generally. Since the declaration, these international actions became springboards for intensified action at the regional level on women issues. At national levels, committees with representatives from research institutes, trade unions, NGOs and other experts, became actively involved in women issues. Thus between 1975 and 1985, christened the UN Decade for women, discussions were opened up addressing the necessity and need for the empowerment of women in all fronts; socially, educationally, politically, economically, culturally, etc. These discussions attracted global interests on women and their concerns, and it led to the formation of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The Commission served as the mouth organ as well as mouth opener advising the UN about the promotion and advancement of women issues which ultimately culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

A decade after the UN Decade for women in 1995, the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference was held in Beijing China with global attendance to discuss strategies and actions towards the full empowerment of women. The Conference adopted Platform for Action (PFA) to address key issues affecting women and obstacles militating against their interests. The Platform identified twelve critical areas of concern that could lead to fundamental

changes in the lives of women as follows: women and poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, women and economy, power and decision making, Institutional mechanism, women and the media, human rights of women, the girl child and women and environment (WIN 2001). As a follow-up, another conference was held in New York in the year 2000 to assess the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

Thus the 1975 Conference on women in Mexico, the Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995) conferences offered numerous opportunities for the UN system to mobilize the International Community around women issues. Most recently in June 2000, a special session of the UN General Assembly- Beijing Plus-five- took place in New York to analyze the progress accomplished since Beijing and to evaluate what remains to be done in order to achieve global gender, an official UN priority since Mexico. The UN preoccupation with this issue since 1975 has been marked by shifts in the organization's definition of gender equality. It has refined its understanding of the workings of domination multiplying the numbers of studies it has commissioned on the subject. In fact, the Beijing Conference which – which convened no fewer than 30000 women- brought to a close two decades of UN reflection on women and development, announcing a new international strategy and an action plan focused on gender and the effects of the economic, social and cultural divisions of both productive and reproductive work ( Bessis 2004).

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Gender**

This refers to socially constructed roles of women and men (girls and boys) ascribed to them based on their sex, whereas the term 'sex' refers to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles depend on a particular socio-economic, political, and cultural context, and are affected by other factors including age, race, class, and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned and vary widely within and between cultures. Unlike a person's sex, gender roles can change. Gender roles help to determine women's access to rights, resources, and opportunities (WOMEN, 2000:3). Gender is also seen as a development issue (World Bank, 2001:69); it is socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviors and expectations associated with females and males. Women and men are different biologically but all cultures interpret and elaborate these innate biological differences into a set of social expectations about what behaviors and activities are appropriate, and what rights, resources, and power they possess. While these expectations vary considerably among societies, there are also some striking similarities. For example, nearly all societies give the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children to women and girls, and that for military service and national defense to men.

Like race, ethnicity, and class, gender is a social category that largely establishes one's life chances, shaping one's participation in society and in the economy (Ibid: 2). Some societies do not experience racial or ethnic divides, but all societies experience gender asymmetries – differences and disparities – to varying degrees. Often these asymmetries take time to change, but they are far from static. In fact, they can at times change quite rapidly in response to policy and changing socio-economic conditions. According to Pearson (2000:18), gender relations are part of social relations, referring to the ways in which the social categories of men and women, male and female, relate over the whole range of social organizations, not just to interactions between individual men and women in the sphere of personal relationships, or in terms of biological reproduction. In all aspects of social activity, including access to resources for production, rewards or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power, and participation in cultural, political, and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behaviour and the outcome of any social interaction. As well as institutions between individual men and women, gender relations describe the social meaning of being male and female, and thus what is considered appropriate behavior or activity for men and women.

### **Gender Equality**

This means equal opportunities for both sexes (male and female). That is opportunities and access to resources for the full realization of all possible potentials of the person, male or female. Gender equality issues need to be addressed from a human rights perspective. This requires removing all legal barriers to women's equality; ending violence against women and eliminating administrative, cultural, social, and economic obstacles to the realization of women's rights and economic independence.

The term gender equality is defined in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process) (World Bank, 2001:69). Women's equal participation with men in power and decision-making is part of their fundamental rights to participate in political life and at the core of gender equality and women's empowerment (MDGs, 2000).

### **Gender Inequality/Discrimination**

This refers to societal practices either legally or conventionally that put men (boys) at a vantage position over women (girls). Such practices are reflective in socio-economic and political practices of most societies. A growing body of empirical evidence shows that persistent gender inequalities impose significant costs on societies – on their ability to grow, to reduce poverty and to govern effectively (World Bank, 2001:33).

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

This refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated (UN Economic and Social Council, 1997). It is a goal-oriented process. It recognizes that most institutions consciously and unconsciously serve the interests of men and encourages institutions to adopt a gender perspective in transforming themselves. It promotes the full participation of women in decision-making so that women's needs move from the margins to the center of development planning and resource allocation (NGP, 2006:124).

### **Women**

The United Nations (1986; 1995) defines women as the Feminine component of the human species who, apart from serving as a vehicle of nurturing human life, are also producers, consumers and an equally endowed agent for fostering a wholesome political, social, and economic development in the society. The participation of women in every aspect of national life is contributing to development. Women's involvement in power-sharing and decision-making is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition for the sustenance of the nation's democratic experiment (Dauda, 2004:85).

Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the well-being of the human race (Enemuo, 1999:226). In Nigeria as elsewhere, it is said that women have always played five key roles – mother, producer, home manager, community organizer, and social, cultural, and political activist (UNDP, 1997:9). Despite their large number and crucial functions, the division of roles between the male and female sexes, as prescribed by most cultures, assigns the subordinate position to women. Consequently, women have for long suffered various forms of discrimination, inequality, exclusion, and violence.

### **Empowerment**

The process of empowerment involves transforming the economic, social, psychological, political, and legal circumstances of the currently powerless (Halfani, 1993:2). For women to have a sense of belonging and be able to contribute meaningfully, to governance and development, they should be enhanced and empowered economically, socially and politically. Economic empowerment is about equity, equality in access to and

availability of educational and employment opportunities. Political empowerment raises gender considerations on planning and implementation of policies. To strengthen socially is equivalent to specific consideration of women with due regard to their multipurpose roles as wives, mothers, and managers (Ogunleye – Adetona, 2003: 211). In the incisive words of Ihovbere, empowerment involves: “a form of socio-economic and political restructuring which removes the locus of power from the current custodians of state power and enables the currently disadvantaged to meet their basic needs, fully participate in decision making and provide opportunities to challenge internal and external oppression (1995:153). It equally refers to the process of ‘conscientization,’ which builds critical analytical skills for individuals to gain self-confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Empowerment of women is an essential process in the transformation of gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of subordination and discrimination (NGP, 2006:122).

### **International Organizations**

An international organization is an organization with an international membership, scope, or presence. There are two main types: International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs): non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate internationally. These include international non-profit organizations and worldwide companies such as the World Organization of the Scout Movement and the International Committee of the Red Cross (Wikipedia).

Intergovernmental organizations, also known as international governmental organizations (IGOs): the type of organization most closely associated with the term 'international organization', these are organizations that are made up primarily of sovereign states (referred to as member states). Notable examples include the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (COE), International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Police Organization (INTERPOL).

The first and oldest intergovernmental organization is the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine, created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. The role of international organizations is helping to set the international agenda, mediating political bargaining, providing a place for political initiatives and acting as catalysts for coalition-formation. International organizations also define the salient issues and decide which issues can be grouped together, thus help governmental priority determination or other governmental arrangements. Spurred by the political and economic interdependencies and advances in communication and transportation that developed after World War II, the UN became the centerpiece of a network of international organizations. International organizations serve many diverse functions, including collecting information and monitoring trends (e.g., the World Meteorological Organization), delivering services and aid (e.g., the World Health Organization), and providing forums for bargaining (e.g., the European Union) and settling disputes (e.g., the World Trade Organization). By providing political institutions through which states can work together to achieve common objectives, international organizations can help to foster cooperative behavior. IGOs also serve useful purposes for individual states, which often use them as instruments of foreign policy to legitimate their actions and to constrain the behavior of other states.

Although the daily operations of most international organizations are managed by specialized international bureaucracies, ultimate authority rests with state members. IGOs often work closely with other organizations, including NGOs (e.g., Greenpeace and Amnesty International), which serve many of the same functions as their IGO counterparts and are particularly useful for mobilizing public support, monitoring the effectiveness of international aid, and providing information and expertise. Although many of the thousands of NGOs direct their activities toward less developed countries in Africa and Asia, some of which have authoritarian forms of government, most of these groups are based in developed states with pluralist political systems. Only a small fraction of NGOs are international in scope, though they have played an increasingly important role in international relations.

## Gender and International Organizations; A Correlational Analysis

Viewing gender as a social construct that focuses on the societal ascribed roles of men and women or boys and girls on the basis of their sex, the International Organizations have and are still playing active roles in gender issues globally especially within the auspices of the United Nations. Spurred by the political and economic interdependencies and advances in communication and transportation that developed after World War II, the UN became the centerpiece of a network of international organizations. As the centerpiece for International Organizations, the United Nations performs functions that are global in outlook to project, promote, empower and liberate women by bailing them out of the cocoon and shackles of customs, culture, religion, barbarism, poverty and political oblivion which they had and are still experiencing in parts of the world.

It must be stressed that the international organizations are the conduit pipes and platforms through which the quest for gender and women empowerment are being orchestrated and disseminated globally. The democratized global communities coupled with globalization has provided impetus for gender and women advocates to pursue, within the ambit of the law, gender justice and parity for women in societal administration. The beingship of the female gender is equally anchored on the agitations, lobbying, advocacy and education of stakeholders across the globe. The UN Decade for women (1975-1985) which opened up discussions on women addresses the need for the empowerment of women in all fronts; socially, educationally, politically, economically, culturally, etc. These discussions attracted global interest on women and their concerns. In the words of Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (2017) *United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director*:

the UN Women supported women to claim their right to equal treatment under the law, to gain elected office, to draw on the power of innovation and technology, and to become leaders through sports, among many other initiatives. We also supported civil society and women's rights activists to inform and influence crucial policy discussions.

She went further to maintain that:

In university campuses across the continents, students and faculty, men and women alike, are devising creative ways to prevent sexual harassment and other forms of violence. UN Women extended vital assistance to women survivors of Boko Haram's terror as well as those who suffered the devastation of natural disasters. The proportion of women military experts deployed to UN peacekeeping missions doubled. We built on strong research in the sphere of women, peace, and security to back the integration of gender in counter-terrorism policy, and integrate women into early warning efforts.

Thus like law (national/international); which regulates all interpersonal activities of human beings, International Organizations, especially at the level of the UN, have assumed the pivotal role of regulating and promoting gender and women issues in all their entirety by serving as the think-tank and nursery institutions to grow, germinate and propagate women issues before such issues are adopted by member nations of the UN. There is, therefore, a symbiotic relationship between the International Organizations and gender. To specifically address the contributory roles of the International Organizations to gender and women development, the work undertakes a descriptive analysis of some International Organizations alongside the following headings with a view to bringing into the fore their contributory roles to gender and women development.

### The UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women, was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports the UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

International commitments, affirmed by the UN Member States, set globally agreed benchmarks that guide actions and progress towards gender equality. Through evidence and advocacy, UN Women supports continued advancement of norms and standards, in line with women's human rights. We mobilize governments, civil society organizations and others to keep the bar high in forums dedicated to gender equality. In other deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda, we work to make sure the spotlight shines fully on gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals and a more inclusive world.

Specifically, the UN Women Annual Report 2016-2017([annualreport.unwomen.org](http://annualreport.unwomen.org)) showcased the activities of the UN vis-à-vis the UN Women towards women and gender empowerment in the following areas:

### **Leading the Way to Political Inclusion**

More women than ever are successfully running for office, climbing the corporate ladder and shattering the glass ceiling. But not yet in numbers equal to men. In the 2030 Agenda, the world agreed that progress must accelerate, and soon. The global goals depend on women's full participation and leadership in all arenas of life. UN Women advocates laws and policies that boost the number of women leaders. We help women acquire skills to compete at the top of their game. Our support contributes to a fairer, more inclusive world—the vision of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Claiming Rightful Roles in the Economy**

Women's economic contributions can unlock the promise of the global goals. When all women can obtain decently paid work or become entrepreneurs, they improve their own well-being. They also take the world closer to ending poverty and hunger, attaining sustainable economic growth, making the most of innovation and reducing inequalities. Women globally are still paid and employed at lower rates than men. They assume an unfair and unrecognized share of unpaid care work at home. UN Women helps empower women to break these discriminatory barriers and claim their rightful and equal roles in an inclusive economy. UN Women's work described below illustrates contributions especially to the Sustainable Development Goals on poverty, climate change, gender equality and decent work.

### **Ending Violence against Women**

Realizing the 2030 Agenda ambitions of achieving peaceful societies and safe, sustainable cities as well as eradicating poverty depends on ending violence against women, the world's most pervasive human rights violation. In its worst forms, violence deprives women of their lives. It undercuts their ability to work, to gain an education, and to enjoy health and well-being, among other human rights. Ending violence requires laws and services geared towards protection and the provision of support to survivors. Prevention of violence by addressing its root causes is equally important. And people from all walks of life, men and women, must mobilize to say no to violence. UN Women's work described below illustrates contributions especially to the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality, peaceful and inclusive societies, and safe cities.

## **Striving for Peace and Justice**

The 2030 Agenda aspires to peaceful, just, inclusive societies to underpin sustained development. Around the world, women lead movements for peace and heal divided communities. They prevent conflicts from erupting, a growing imperative in a world prone to violent extremism. They are also highly vulnerable to violations of their rights, such as through rape as a weapon of war. UN Women's work described below illustrates contributions especially to the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality, peace and justice, and partnerships.

## **Bridging the Humanitarian-Development Divide**

A storm, an earthquake, a conflict—crises disrupt lives and derail development, stalling progress on the global goals. Without a humanitarian lifeline, people may be pushed deeper into poverty and ill health, losing homes and means vital to livelihoods. Risks for women may be even acuter. They typically have fewer resources to survive and rebuild, and face increased threats of sexual violence. Yet when empowered, women are leaders on the road to recovery. UN Women heads a global drive to put women and gender equality at the center of the humanitarian action, including by implementing programmes that in 2016 served 120,000 women. UN Women's work described below illustrates contributions especially to the Sustainable Development Goals on poverty, gender equality and inclusion.

## **Planning and Budgeting for Empowerment and Equality**

Public plans and budgets are an expression of national priorities. When they take gender into account, they can be designed to end discrimination. Budgets and plans that equally respond to the needs of both women and men can contribute to progress across all of the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting the realization of the promise of leaving no one behind. They can, for instance, target resources to deliver high-quality health services to all women or invest in infrastructure for women in slums to escape poverty—among many other issues. UN Women, having pioneered gender-responsive planning and budgeting around the world, champions the integration of gender equality into national plans to achieve the global goals.

## **The UN General Assembly and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

On 25 September 2015, the 194 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Following the adoption, UN agencies under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Group decided to support an independent campaign to help communicate the agreed Sustainable Development Goals to a wider constituency. Known as Project Everyone, the independent campaign introduced the term *Global Goals* and was supported by corporate institutions and other International Organizations. The Official Agenda for Sustainable adopted on 25 September 2015 has 92 paragraphs. Paragraph 51 outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the associated 169 targets. The 17 SDGs are listed below:

**Goal 1: No Poverty: There is any poverty – End Poverty in All its Forms – Everywhere**

**Goal 2: Zero Hunger: Zero Hunger – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

**Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being: Good Health and Well-being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

**Goal 4: Quality Education: Quality Education** – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

**Goal 5: Gender Equality: Gender Equality** – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large

**Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: Clean Water and Sanitation** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

**Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Affordable and Clean Energy** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

**Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Decent Work and Economic Growth** – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

**Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure : Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

**Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities: Reduced Inequalities** – Reduce income inequality within and among countries.

**Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Sustainable Cities and Communities** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: Responsible Consumption and Production** – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**Goal 13: Climate Action: Climate Action** – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.

**Goal 14: Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the world’s oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

**Goal 15: Life on Land: Life on Land** – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

**Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

**Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Partnerships for the Goals** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Lofty as the above goals are, they have implications for women and gender equality, and they are championed mainly by International Organizations particularly under the auspices of the UN. Despite a stand-alone goal on gender equality, there is widespread consensus that progress on any and all of the SDGs will be stalled if women's empowerment and gender equality is not prioritized. Arguments and evidence from sources as diverse and as economically-oriented as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to expected sources such as UN Women, bolster the case that investments in women and girls impact national and global development in ways that exceed their initial scope.

### **African Union: Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa**

The Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union, meeting in the Third Ordinary Session of their Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6-8 July 2004 opined as follows:

“Reaffirming our commitment to the principle of gender equality as enshrined in Article 4(1) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women’s rights, including the Dakar Platform for Action (1994), the Beijing platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-1979), the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of women (1999); the outcome Document of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Implementation of the Beijing platform for Action (2000). UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of women in Africa (2003)... hereby agree to:

1. Accelerate the implementation of gender-specific economic, social, and legal measures aimed at combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and effectively implement both Abuja and Maputo Declarations on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and other related Infectious Diseases.
2. Ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace process including the prevention, resolution, management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN resolution 1325 (2000) and to also appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the African Union.
3. Launch within the next one year, a campaign for systematic prohibition of the recruitment of child soldiers and abuse of girl children as wives and sex slaves in violation of their rights as enshrined in the African Charter on Rights of the child.
4. Initiate, launch and engage within two years sustained public campaigns against gender-based violence as well as the problem of trafficking in women and girls; Reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behaviour of the African society.
5. Expand and Promote the gender parity principle that we have adopted regarding the Commission of the African Union to all the other organs of the African Union, including its NEPAD programme, to the Regional Economic Communities, and to the national and local levels in collaboration with political parties and the National parliaments in our countries;

6. Ensure the active promotion and protection of all human rights for women and girls including the right to development by raising awareness or by legislation where necessary;
7. Actively promote the implementation of legislation to guarantee women's land, property, and inheritance rights including their rights to the housing;
8. Take specific measures to ensure the education of girls and literacy of women, especially in the rural areas, to achieve the goals of "Education for All" (EFA);
9. Undertake to Sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by the end of 2004 and to support the launching of public campaigns aimed at ensuring its entry into force by 2005 and usher in an era of domesticating and implementing the Protocol as well as other national, regional and international instruments on gender equality by all States Parties;
10. Establish AIDS Watch Africa as a unit within the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission who should render an annual report on HIV/AIDS situation in the continent during annual Summits, and promote the local production of anti-retroviral drugs in our countries;
11. Accept to establish an African Trust Fund for Women for the purpose of building the capacity of African women and further request the African Union Commission to work out the modalities for the operationalization of the Fund with a special focus on women in both urban and rural areas;
12. Commit ourselves to report annually on progress made in terms of gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in this declaration, both at the national and regional levels and regularly provide each other with updates on progress made during our ordinary Sessions;
13. We request the chairperson of the African Union Commission to submit, for our consideration an annual report, during our ordinary sessions, on measures taken to implement the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and all issues raised in this Declaration both at the national and regional levels.

### **The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, and it came into force in 1981. The Nigerian Government ratified CEDAW in 1985. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) has rightly described CEDAW as 'a Bill of Rights for Women.' CEDAW has placed women at the center of human rights concerns. Consisting of a preamble and thirty articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention provides the basis for the realization of equality between men and women through ensuring women's access to equal opportunities in all spheres of life: political, economic, social, and cultural. CEDAW has been a veritable instrument for the guidance of State Parties on measures for the protection of women against all forms of discrimination against women to guarantee equality, development, and peace.

### **The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the eight International Development Goals for the year 2015 that had been established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. All 191 United Nations member states at that time and at least 22 International Organizations committed to helping achieve the following Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The Objectives and Contexts of the Millennium Development Goals are to:

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger;

2. Achieve Universal Basic Education;
3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women;
4. Reduce Child Mortality;
5. Improve Material Health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability;
8. Development a Global Partnership for Development

### Conclusion

Whatever happens in one part of the world as a global village, affects the other part. Structurally speaking, therefore, as a member of the international communities, if the problem of extreme hunger, diseases, inflation, unemployment, human rights abuses, subjugation of womanhood and early death among humanity is not checked, controlled and reduced, it will negatively affect their other endeavors. In effect, International Organizations have become the conduit pipes through which the global developmental agenda are pursued and spread. Some of these agenda are executed by these organizations while they lobby government in executing others; they have thus become important actors and partners in development.

### References

- i. Bessis, S. 2004. “International Organizations and Gender: New Paradigms and Old Habits”
  - i. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no.2 .Winter; 633-647.
- ii. Enemu, F. C. 1999. *Gender and Women Empowerment*. Eds. Anifowose, R. and Enemu, F.C. Elements of Politics. Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd.
  - i.
- iii. Halfani, M. S: 1993. *Constraints on Empowerment*. Eds.Sandbrook, R. and Halfani, M. *Empowering People: Building Community Civil Associations and Legality in Africa*. University of Toronto: Center for Urban and Community Studies.
  - i.
  - ii.
- iv. Ibeanu, O. 2009. *Herstoricising the Marginalization of Nigerian Women in Politics*. Eds.
  - i. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O. & Mahdi, S. *Election Herstories Political Experiences of women in Nigeria* . Department for International Development (DFID).
  - ii.
- v. Ihonvbere, J. O. 1995. *Beyond Governance: The State and Democratization in Sub-Sahara Africa*.
  - i. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. No. 50.
- vi. Mlambo-Ngcuka, P. 2017. *United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director in the foreword UN Women Annual Report 2016-2017 available at:*
  - i.
  - ii. [annualreport.unwomen.org](http://annualreport.unwomen.org) Accessed 25/10/2017
- vii. *National Gender Policy*. 2006. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development.
- viii. Ogunleye–Adetona, C. I. 2003. *Gender Issues and Development: A welfaristic Perspective*. *International Journal of Gender and Health Studies* Vol. 1, No.1. IKOTEKPENE: Development Universal Consortia.
- ix. Pearson, R. (2000). *Rethinking Gender Matters in Development*. Eds. Allen, T.&Thomas, A. *Poverty and Development into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
  - i.
- x. *United Nations Development Programme, Nigerian Human Development Report, 1996*.
  - a. Lagos: UNDP, 1997.
- xi. UNESCO(1999). *Unit for the Promotion of the Status of women and Gender Equality*,
  - a. *Passport to Equality*. Paris
- xii. *UN Women Annual Report 2016-2017 available at: [annualreport.unwomen.org](http://annualreport.unwomen.org) Accessed*
  - i. 25/10/2017
- xiii. WACOL (2001). *Women’s Socio-Economic and Legal Rights*. Enugu. *Women’s Aid*
  - a. *Collective*
- xiv. WIN (2001): *Beijing+5 Impact Assessment (1995-2000)* (ed.) Angela, Abah Odah
- xv. World Bank .2001. *Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*. A co publication of the World Bank & Oxford University Press.
- xvi. *Women in Public Life*. Vol. 3, No. 2. Feb. 2000.

- xvii. *Millennium Development Goals .2000. Promote gender equality and empower women. Downloaded from the internet; http://www.Development goals. Org/Gender –*  
a. *Equality. htm*