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**Written Submission from NAWO, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, to the Consultation of the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into the Government's plans for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (#SDG5)**

**Executive Summary**

NAWO is a UK NGO accredited to the UN by ECOSOC. It is an umbrella organisation that seeks the views of its members and this submission includes those views.

There is a clear lack of awareness generally about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

NAWO seeks commitment from Her Majesty's Government (HMG) to the **development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5** for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030.

In this NAP, responsibility for domestic implementation should be with the Cabinet Office at the Ministerial level, with Ministers responsible and focal points in each Government Department. It should provide a robust framework that will establish clear outcome based targets for each Government department. This should be a public document. There must be consistency and transparency in the reporting methodology adopted on implementation of Goal 5 and the other goals including the ability to track progress year on year and an annual report to Parliament. The Plan needs to include full involvement of civil society. A national indicator framework is required as soon as possible to assist in identifying those furthest behind.

In addition to implementation of Goal 5, gender mainstreaming is important across all SDGs with the targets relating to women and girls included in the NAP for Goal 5.

NAWO suggests the Government establishes mechanisms to engage with the devolved administrations and local government including co-ordination of activity around the SDG's and methodology for reporting progress.

NAWO seeks the allocation of resources by Government to and in partnership with key women's organisations across the four nations of the UK, especially, the UK NGO CSW Alliance to develop

priorities based on major gaps and poor development of gender equality, and plan policies for implementation and monitoring of new programmes to fully achieve Goal 5.

NAWO proposes compulsory measures such as quotas for Parliamentary and local government seats; and to Boards of Corporations; and an end to unfettered demand for commercialized and exploitative sex that underpins inequality between women and men and increases sexual violence. Pornography is a related problem that would also need to be addressed.

The UK should report, as a matter of priority, to the HLPF in 2018.

The Women and Equalities Select Committee should be established on a permanent basis

NAWO suggests that HMG must meet its 'Leave no-one behind' commitment to marginalised groups, including older women, by working across departments to ensure disaggregated data is collected and reported across all the targets and goals; and that this is used to design policies and programmes in the UK as well as those it supports overseas.

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Cairo Declaration of Population and Development, and the Beijing Platform for Action all acknowledge and recommend **specific actions to tackle age discrimination and the multiple discrimination that women face**. NAWO asks that HMG reinforce its commitment to these agreements in its implementation of Agenda 2030 and the implementation of the SDGs.

The UK should report, as a matter of priority, to the HLPF in 2018.

The Women and Equalities Select Committee should be established on a permanent basis.

## **Submission**

NAWO welcomes the WEC inquiry into Agenda 2030 and the implementation of SDG 5.

NAWO takes the view that this presents an excellent opportunity to examine how the Government will approach and co-ordinate domestic policy and legislative changes required for agenda 2030 and implementation of SDGs and we note the existing report published by the British Council Report and that of the International Development Committee.

NAWO looks forward to an ambitious agenda from HMG that will make a positive and sustainable change to people's lives. The UK must continue to be an exemplar of best practice both domestically and internationally. The UK Government has an impressive track record of contributing to humanitarian and development support and promoting human rights and this needs to continue.

NAWO is a registered UK charity whose vision is to enable women's access to and enjoyment of their human rights, and equality between women and men both within the UK and throughout the world. NAWO is the member of the European Women's Lobby representing English women and their organisations to the Lobby. This is achieved with sister organisations in Scotland (Engender),

Wales (WENWALES) and N. Ireland (NIWEP) members of which come together with NAWO to form the UK Joint Committee on Women. We seek to ensure that matters from and with Europe, and of the wider global society, are understood and relayed to women in the UK and, vice versa that the concerns of women in the UK underpin NAWO and UKJCW advocacy in the EU and at the UN. NAWO always attends the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women and seeks to influence the outcome documents in an intended progressive direction seeking rapid advancement of women's status in the face often of backlash and attempts to undermine language already achieved. NAWO introduces young women to CSW providing them with the opportunity to attend, training and supporting them to make presentations at side events with other NGOs working as partners from a range of other member states, through its Young Women's Alliance. Senior members of NAWO are known to UN Women and Annette Lawson (Ambassador to NAWO) was named by UN Women a 'global thought leader on gender equality' and invited to a unique meeting of expert women at the time of the Agenda 2030 launch in September 2015 at the UN. NAWO trustees participate in the dialogue on Agenda 2030 and its implications for women and girls through the Major Women's Group and other fora. We were also active in lobbying for a stand-alone goal on women and girls and for gendered targets in all the goals. NAWO has been active in holding events in the UK and at the UN to raise awareness on Agenda 2030 including on the need for country specific indicators. NAWO is the Secretariat for the UK NGO CSW Alliance and its Chair, Zarin Hainsworth, is also the elected Chair of the CSW Alliance.

**Q. 1. How well understood are the Goals in the UK and what more can be done to promote them?**

There appears to be little knowledge of Agenda 2030 outside the development world, including Goal 5. There is little understanding that these are global goals and that they need to be implemented at all levels and in all countries. There is also little understanding of the importance of gender mainstreaming across all the goals and throughout the 2030 Agenda. While the UK played a leading role in the development of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, it is now in danger of being left behind in comparison with many other European countries. There is a general lack of awareness about the global indicator framework and the need for a national indicator framework.

The Government needs to exhibit a clear and understandable commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs, not only in its overseas development activities but also domestically. Implementation, follow up and review must therefore be located firmly in the Cabinet Office, and not in DFID. While DFID is the natural home for overseas development activities, it is not the right place for domestic implementation and each Department and Ministry, including the GEO, should have a Minister in charge of implementation, follow up and review, as well as a designated focal point.

As it is already more than a year since the launch of Agenda 2030, the Office of National Statistics (ONS), needs to complete the development of a national indicator framework that complements the IAEG-SDGs developed Global Indicator framework as a matter of urgency.

**Q. 2. Is there consensus across Government about what the terms used in Goal 5 mean in the UK context?**

NAWO is unaware of any current practice at intra-governmental level to ensure comprehension

and to develop plans for implementing sustainable development goals, including Goal 5 and the gender related targets in other goals, across government. In general, the various targets included under Goal 5 appear to be unknown. There is also a lack of awareness of the need to mainstream gender across the implementation of all the other targets and the targets related to women and girls. It would appear that there is also insufficient knowledge about the follow-up and review processes as well as the other elements of the 2030 Agenda that could have an important impact on the implementation of Goal 5 and gender mainstreaming in the UK. Full implementation requires consultation across Government on the targets included in Goal 5 and other gender-related targets in the UK context.

There needs to be consensus across Government as to which targets have been implemented and to what extent; what more can be done; and who has been left behind, particularly furthest behind.

**Q. 3. What action is the UK Government taking to implement Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in the UK by 2030?**

NAWO has been seeking replies to this question for some time. There is no plan, we are told, to develop a National Action Plan for the implementation of the SDGs including Goal 5. Yet, there are plans as always to attend CSW at which these related questions are bound to arise. The Government does have a NAP related to Women Peace and Security (as a result of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions). When GEO has been asked about the implementation plans, we have been informed that GEO is responsible for Goal 5 and some aspects of Goal 10 but it has not been possible to ascertain which targets and what plans are for the gendered targets in other Goals. GEO also informed us that the Office for National Statistics had undertaken a stakeholder consultation on the indicators for Agenda 2030 but we had not been asked to participate.

**Q. 3(i) What more can the UK Government do to achieve this?**

The UK Government needs to collect and publish relevant data on both what is helping and on what the outstanding gaps are for women's equality and empowerment and to look across all ages – i.e. to include the Girl Child and the Older Woman. An intersectional approach is needed because there are significant gaps between economically disadvantaged and disempowered women in some of the Black and ethnic minority groups within the UK, as also for disabled women.

There is a need for the Government to raise awareness of SDGs. At the moment the lack of public awareness will be an obstacle and a challenge in implementing any kind of action plan.

There is a need for a NAP with domestic targets and indicators looking at SDG and gender mainstreaming across departments. This will need to include an analysis and assessment of what Goal 5 means in the UK context as well as the other goals.

The main focus of the UK Government on gender equality currently is in its overseas development where "leave no one behind" is driving aspects of its work on adolescent girls, including their education and addressing concerns such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The UK Government must recognise the value of its work with civil society on gender, drawing on the experience of platforms such as the UK NGO CSW Alliance and the GADN to ensure the diverse voices of women are heard. The GEO should, in consultation with parliamentarians and selected

civil society actors, begin a process to identify the extent to which each target has been implemented to date (including those with gender implications under other goals) and an action plan developed to see what more can be done with special emphasis on reaching those furthest behind first. Implementation should be measured annually against the national and global indicator framework.

In addition the Government must seek to consult with women in such groups so that they know the particular stresses under which women are living. Women's organisations should be invited to help with providing first hand data and case studies.

The Government should sign up for the voluntary national review (VNR) process of the HLPF in 2018 and take a leadership role, rather than being left behind. As Goal 5 is one of the goals selected for review in 2017 it would have been helpful if the UK had reported in this session, but it may now be too late.

The UK Government should work towards the SDGs' pledge of implementing nationally appropriate social protection floors that provide a basic level of income for all. This should include non-contributory social pensions which do not discriminate according to labour market patterns or contributory records. The adoption of social protection floors internationally will help to achieve goals 1, 5 and others.

Domestically, the UK Government should extend the Equality Act 2010 to bringing claims on multiple grounds of discrimination. At a minimum, section 14 should be brought into force immediately, enabling people to bring combined discrimination claims (for example, age and sex). It should also repeal prohibitive tribunal fees for discrimination claims.

Action to end violence against women and girls must take into account older women and respond to violence at each and every stage of women's lives.

### **Q.3 (ii) What more do individual government departments need to do to prioritize Goal 5 targets? What practical steps need to be taken?**

NAWO considers every Government Departments should identify all targets related to gender equality and women's empowerment that are within its remit, including those in Goal 5 and develop their action plans for their implementation and achievement. Civil society organizations should be involved in this process, including making commitments to implementation showing their 'added value'. It should be compulsory for each Department to present data backed by practical policy decision to implement plans to affect women and girls in their particular domains so that progress is made.

High quality timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, marital status, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location etc. Is essential in order to effectively monitor SDG progress. To improve the quality of data, it is vital that academia, government and civil society work together to obtain the relevant information on the most vulnerable women and girls, and work to ensure their voices are heard.

It is vital that intersectionality is understood. For example, violence against women is often dealt with as a matter of health but it is also relevant to the Department of Justice. Housing, poverty, employment, education, skills and so much else impact on VAWG. Culture and stereotypes, portrayals in the media fall under the Department of Culture but this also affects VAWG. Thus an integrated and holistic plan must be developed across Government that ensures implementation of all the SDGs including Goal 5 which underpins success in all areas.

The contribution of women throughout their life-cycle to unpaid care work, must be recognised especially that of older women, and supported through age- and gender-sensitive economic and social policies.

**Q. 4. What resourcing is in place for the implementation of Goal 5? Is further resourcing required?**

NAWO is not aware of resourcing plans for the implementation of Goal 5. Funding for women's organisations is imperative. UK wide indicators should include the resourcing of women and their organisations as a primary goal, and as a means to implementing all gendered targets across all Goals including 5.

Political parties and others in positions of power such as corporations need to be required to establish special measures (eg quotas) since voluntary efforts have proven unable to achieve more than marginal, insufficient and unsustainable change in women's roles in decision-making.

A strong, well resourced, institutional mechanism with civil society as well as the establishment of the Women and Equalities Select Committee on a permanent basis is required. (This is a gap outlined in the CEDAW observations to the UK). Resources will be required to implement the action plan for Goal 5 and other related gender targets and the action plan should be costed, recognizing as a priority to reach those further behind first.

**Q. 5. How effective is coordination and leadership across UK government departments on implementing Goal 5? Is a single point of responsibility preferable to delegated responsibility across departments, and who should lead?**

NAWO is aware that the Government is falling short in the implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. NAWO suggest there should be a Cabinet Office minister, as well as Ministers in all Departments with responsibility for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There should also be a focal point in each Department of Government to ensure dovetailed and intergrated implementation, analysis and monitoring. For example, if the GEO is leading on Goal 5, it must work with focal points in all the other Departments to ensure gender mainstreaming and accountability, as well as with civil society which it currently does very well in the context of the CSW.

NAWO is unclear whether DFID's previous commitment to gender equality is being carried forward. DFID and the FCO must be required to include Agenda 2030 and SDGs in their work. Women's increasing disaffection and involvement in terrorism is testament to the need to implement Goal 5 everywhere. The power of women to act transformatively in relation to the eradication of poverty and the development of peace and avoidance of conflict are all aspects of the SDGs and vital to successful UK foreign policy.

**Q. 6. What monitoring mechanisms are in place to measure progress in the UK against Goal 5 and how can these be improved?**

There is a monitoring process through the work of the HLPF and the global indicator framework at the global level. By beginning reporting through the VNRs, plus reports to the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR), CEDAW and other human rights instruments, there is an existing strong reporting system that could be augmented by an Annual Report on Goal 5 and gender mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda in the UK. The report should be developed with the full involvement of civil society who should also be involved in its presentation. (cf Finland at the 2016 HLPF.)

As there is as yet no national plan, NAWO is unaware of domestic monitoring mechanisms.

**Q. 7. Which targets under Goal 5 are the most difficult to measure progress against? How can the Government ensure that the hard to measure targets are not neglected? Which targets/issues under Goal 5 have been hardest to make progress on and why? Which require a greater emphasis?**

If compared with many countries, the UK has made progress across the targets under Goal 5 and other gender-related targets, but it is necessary for an assessment to be carried out based on relevant indicators and available data on the current situation for each one. Disaggregation will help to identify those furthest behind who require a greater emphasis.

Once there is a national indicator framework for the UK, this will highlight the answer to this question in the UK context.

One of the most difficult to answer under the global framework is the indicator 5.6.2 under target 5.6 on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. This is an important target for gender equality and women's empowerment and consultations should be undertaken by the National Statistical Office to consider how it can be measured in the UK.

Women's organisations globally are certain that one method of collecting data has to be included – the actual lived experience of women and girls in the range of areas under discussion. Women's organisations in the UK stand ready to support a carefully constructed set of priorities by government for the advancement of women. 'Gender systems' operate to keep women oppressed within our social structure. Combatting one may not succeed if another is left unquestioned. Examples of this can be provided to the Committee. Some examples include: Stereotypical gender roles mirrored and reinforced in all kinds of media; the cultural practice of prostitution where there is social acceptance that men may buy sex (or women's consent to sex) as and when and to do as he pleases, not as she might wish; the role of much more readily accessible pornography leading to serious outcomes for girls still at school as well as all women.

The NAWO Young Women's Alliance has provided opportunities for young women to learn about Agenda 2030. Here are some of their comments on this question.

"Target 5.3. Discussion about these issues in school highlighted the lack of general understanding on these topics, for me particularly prominent in discussing FGM. A small number of students could give a confident definition of FGM, and in my experience, without explicit training in these areas

few staff members understand what FGM is and the motivations behind the practice.

A socially accepted lack of understanding on topics viewed as non-British or non-Western only exacerbates religious misconceptions and global divisions. Assumption that early and forced marriage as well as FGM are globally accepted, the inference of moral inferiority from particular ethnic and religious groups is highly damaging.

The tendency to 'other' people, and classify those from certain groups within society as inherently different, is extremely obstructive to the achievement of the SDGs. prevention rather than prosecution: improved statutory gender-based violence training for public sector workers - particularly social services, education, policing and NHS staff. Seen how passionately my peers will support an end to harmful misogynistic practices when they understand them. Socially, Britain is often considered to be post-sexism, however accounts of harassment and violence embedded in the British female experience acts to disprove this. The imperialistic notion that economic and social development is a foreign concern is failing British girls and girls across the globe...Eradicating harmful misogynistic practices must transcend supposed cultural barriers. Through empowering girls at risk, promoting causes pushing for universal criminalisation of these practices, and improved statutory training, I believe that socially acceptable disregard for and manipulation of target 5.3 can be eradicated."

**Q.8. What role do the private and third sector have to play in achieving Goal 5 in the UK and how effectively are these roles supported by the Government?**

The process for the development of the 2030 Agenda and its follow up and review call through the HLPF for the full involvement of civil society in all aspects. Civil society organizations therefore should be involved proactively and beyond just producing shadow reports. This will require proper resourcing of groupings such as the NGO CSW Alliance. In Finland, the Government is integrating CSOs in implementation and follow up as well as in the review and presenting of their report.

The engagement of the voluntary sector in the implementation of SDG 5 is essential for success. The SDGs offer a historic opportunity to enhance the quality of life across the world. An ambitious government agenda is needed that allows for the participation across all our communities and particularly engaging with those who are the most vulnerable in our society and young people.

Civil society, especially women's organisations are well placed with the expertise and reach to provide direct services; information and advice to statutory bodies; training to business and the public sector at all levels and monitoring of implementation. However they can only do this if they are resourced.

One example of the positive affect of civil society activism from the NAWO YWA members – a few example below indicate the importance and far reaching effect of civil society:

"We met with Stroud District Youth Council and it was inspiring to engage with other young people who are so involved with the area they live in. The SDGs are a perfect platform for reaching out to young people all over Gloucestershire, why aren't we using it for improving gender equality? Whilst at first we are starting small, getting students on the council to take back the concept of the SDGs to their relative schools to spread the word and start lobbying MPs, we are aiming to set up a mini CSW event for all the schools, highlight the SDGs and women's issues in curriculums and hopefully get lots more Feminist societies set up...I believe the SDGs provide us with a clear set of common



goals, and this is why they are so significant – they can unite us.”

“I have held an event with school girls in Years 8 and 9 about the sustainable development goals and what they can do in calling for their rights. During this session I was really impressed with how much the students I was working with engaged with what we were talking about and kept asking questions even after the session had finished. I think this is testament to the passion that young people have to make change and is a reason in itself as to why young people should be involved in the discussion about violence against women and girls (and indeed all discussions pertaining to their rights). The most rewarding aspect for me was seeing students realise how the SDGs are relevant to them personally – particularly how Goal 5 is relevant despite how many advances there have been in recent years in regards to women’s rights.

Schools have a responsibility to include detailed content on consent and abuse as part of the curriculum for all students. If the population had a better understanding of what constitutes abusive behaviour, this would significantly reduce the proportion of violence against women which takes place within a relationship. Schools should also take seriously educating young people on how to campaign for what they feel is important. This could be implemented easily - simply by encouraging teachers and students to present assemblies on topics they are passionate about, promoting student led groups and societies focused on discussing activism, and using the already existing online resources to educate young people on existing legal frameworks such as the SDGs.”

“A survey I did of a group of students at my school highlighted the problems that schools need to address. Whilst 77% of respondents knew of someone who had experienced domestic violence, nearly half of them did not know where to get help if they were victims themselves. If schools were to have specific help points, to which children could go if they feel unsafe, it would provide a place for children to know they can get help, and that they are not alone. A large problem is that many young people just simply do not have access to information about domestic violence. A third of those who responded to my survey said that they had received no information about domestic violence at school. Whilst it is compulsory for schools to provide 2 ½ hours of PSHE teaching a fortnight, there is no requirement to talk about domestic violence. Even one lesson a year providing crucial information, such as what domestic violence entails and how to get help could mean the difference between life and death in some cases. Teachers can also play an important role in helping a child who is suffering as a result of domestic violence. A form tutor, for example, will see them on a daily basis, and therefore can take note of any changes. It is therefore essential that teachers and school staff are instructed on the signs to notice and the next steps to take. “

“I found through the events I held that the examination of gender inequality in schools is all the more vital in enlightening young people about how they can speak out against sexism, whether it happens to them or someone else. Awareness of these issues needs to be raised, and vocalising our own experiences is another way we can do this. The people who read my blog post about how women are oppressed at the intersection of gender and race told me that, as fellow women of colour, it was something they could identify with, and it resonated with them. Having an awareness of the issue made them more likely to pay attention and support change if the problem were to arise. The Sustainable Development Goals, I believe, can play a crucial role in improving the help children and teenagers can access in school.”

The private sector could play a very important role in ensuring implementation across business and

industry and are resourced to do this.

**Q.9. What examples of good practice are there in the UK or abroad, for implementing and monitoring progress against these and other global targets?**

NAWO is a member of the Women's Major Group and of other virtual groups working on climate change, poverty reduction and other issues, which publish success stories and continuously discuss both progress and set backs in monitoring. Examples can be given should the committee seek further information or evidence via witnesses.

NAWO YWA members undertook research on this area:

"Proportion of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee all women and adolescents access to sexual and reproductive health services (Target 5.6) -

We believe that goal 5.6 is really important for stopping violence against refugee women as these women and girls face dangers such as FGM, trafficking and rape. Refugee women must be able to get physical and mental help in refugee camps. If governments tell these women their sexual and reproductive rights and allow them to access them, then refugee women will be able to start building new lives."

"Percentage of population using safely managed sanitation services (Goal 6) -

Government must make sure that refugee camps have flushing toilets, private toilet and shower cubicles and access to sanitary products too meet goal 6. Refugee women can be at risk of violence if sanitation facilities are shared, and if they don't have access to products like tampons then they won't be able to get involved in normal day to day life."

"Proportion of women and girls (aged 15-49) subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, since age 15 (Goal 5.2)

Refugee women and girls face big risks of gender based violence, therefore this target must be used to lower these risks. We think this could be helped by having increased safety and security for displaced women in refugee camps, such as female staff they can turn to and talk to."

Ratification of the Istanbul Convention to achieve the comprehensive legal protection against violence on women and girls provided in the convention, undertaken by other countries is an example of best practice. The Joint Committee on Human Rights has stated that the UK Government could harm its international reputation as a leader on tackling violence against women by failing to ratify the Istanbul Convention. The UK Government should confirm that this issue is now a priority, set out a timetable and outline how it will co-ordinate its activity with the devolved administrations on the issue of extraterritorial jurisdiction. It could support the Private Members Bill on 16 December.

The models for the involvement of civil society organizations in the implementation, follow up and review in Finland and Germany, should be considered by the UK Government. They can access organized and diverse groupings of civil society already in existence, for example the NGO CSW Alliance, the Bond SDG Group, and the UK Stakeholders Forum.

**Q. 10. How effectively does the UK Government learn from such practice?**

This is a question better to be put to members of the Government. There has been poor response to letters to Ministers.