

1. Draft Resolution: **Towards a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy**

Proposed by CFUW

Supporting NFA:

TBD

This Resolution builds on the previous 1992 Resolution. The CFUW 2025 resolution proposal is to retain Resolve 1 and 2 from the 1992 Resolution, revise Clause 3, and add a fourth Clause. The changes reflect a recognition of the importance of collecting consistent data and using the data to inform decisions to improve the outcomes for women in childbirth.

The 35th General Assembly resolves that:

Revised Clause 3:

RESOLVED, That NFAs urge their respective governments to develop and implement programs as part of safe motherhood initiatives, to collect and analyze consistent disaggregated and anonymized data about maternal deaths and close calls, and to share those data in confidential form with relevant groups (e.g. health care providers, policymakers, researchers, advocacy groups, members of the public).

Clause 4:

Resolved that NFAs urge their respective governments to work on a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy. This strategy would promote awareness and best practices among healthcare providers around risk factors (e.g. age, ethnicity, race, income mental health issues, housing, education level, access to medical care), and enhance public education of patient populations.

Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs:

- Write letters and contribute to consultations advocating for the implementation of a comprehensive maternal death prevention strategy as part of our national health care programs.
- Participate in public dialogues regarding the issue and impact of maternal death.
- Feature public speakers in a webinar/Zoom or public lecture on this issue, in partnership **with** local maternal health care providers.

Background

Statement: GWI Resolutions 1992

Safe Motherhood: To urge NFAs:

1. To undertake activities to inform their members about the extent of the problem of maternal mortality and measures for its reduction;
2. To collaborate with other NGOs to develop activities to promote practices for safe motherhood;

3. To urge their governments to develop and implement programmes as part of the safe motherhood initiative.

Supporting Statement:

The 1992 Resolution is comprehensive and encourages education, collaboration and government advocacy to make maternal health safer. Since 1990, progress has been made on a global scale as the maternal mortality ratio worldwide has been cut nearly in half and more than 71 percent of births were assisted by skilled health personnel globally in 2014, an increase from 59 percent in 1990.

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml>

However, globally, every two minutes, a woman still dies during pregnancy or childbirth (about 70 percent of those maternal deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa). Additionally, for every woman who dies, between 20 and 30 will experience injuries, infections or disabilities. Most of these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable. The leading causes of maternal deaths vary from country to country and women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and most are preventable or treatable. Other complications may exist before pregnancy but are worsened during pregnancy, especially if not managed as part of the woman's care. The major complications that account for nearly 75% of all maternal deaths are:

- severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth);
- infections (usually after childbirth);
- high blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia);
- complications from delivery; and
- unsafe abortion.

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

Fewer women die of conditions such as pre-eclampsia in countries with successful maternal health monitoring systems as the collection of consistent national data on maternal deaths enables health care providers to initiate measures to prevent maternal deaths.

References:

United Nations Population Fund
<https://www.unfpa.org/maternal-health>

MMRRACE- UK. Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk Through Audits and The Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care Annual Reports and Confidential Enquiries Across the UK <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrance-uk/reports/maternal-reports>

The UN Millenium Development Goals and Beyond 2015

<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml>

<https://www.unicef.org/health/maternal-and-newborn-health>

2.Draft Resolution: Advancing sustainable development and gender equality through international trade agreements

Proposed by: CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women)
Seconded by: TBD

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves that:

1. National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to ensure that international trade agreements and related policies are used as tools to maximize efforts to promote and thereby to reaffirm and accelerate the achievement of the 2015 United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to affirm commitments/commit to gender equality by consulting with civil society organizations in developing, monitoring and evaluating the gendered impacts of their international trade agreements.

Suggested Plan of Action

Members may use any of the following suggested implementation strategies or other strategies to advance this resolution:

- a. Educate members about member state international trade agreements and related policies and explore specific trade agreements.
- b. Educate members about the importance of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- c. Join coalitions to advocate for international trade agreements that support the SDGs both domestically and internationally.
- d. Monitor data regarding the impact of international trade agreements on women and children and promote public dialogue regarding the impact of these agreements.
- e. Join coalitions to advocate for international trade policies that include specific gender equality and empowerment targets.

Supporting Statement

International trade agreements have the potential to act as catalysts to improve gender equality at the complex intersection of policies on trade, development, employment, migration and equality (Gender Equality & Trade Policy. 2011).

In the era of post COVID-19 recovery, international trade agreements are increasingly important tools for influencing achievement of the interrelated 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (The 17 Goals, 2015).

Development assistance programs and specialized institutions in the area of trade are increasingly attentive to gender issues. Trade agreements impact women as consumers,

producers, workers and entrepreneurs. This is reflected in the activities of organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)-Prosperity for all and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-Better Policies for Better Lives).

The WTO is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. It includes 164 member countries and represents 98% of world trade (World Trade Organization). One of the WTO's main objectives on trade is to become a gender-responsive organization.

World Bank and WTO reporting describes the relationship between trade and the status of women as follows: "Trade can dramatically improve women's lives, creating new jobs, enhancing consumer choice, and increasing women's bargaining power in society. But women's relationship with trade is complex, as it can also lead to job losses and a concentration of work in lower-skilled jobs. To ensure that trade enhances opportunities for everyone - regardless of gender - policymakers should assess the potential impact of trade rules on various groups of people and develop policy responses based on evidence." (World Bank and WTO. 2020).

The rules within International trade agreements are central factors in setting of prices, tariffs, quotas, import and export activity, determination of commodity production, price of agricultural products, employment levels in sectors such as manufacturing, the clothing industry and environmental standards; all of which can have a net positive or negative impact on women. (Women's Issues & Trade Agreements). Gender provisions within trade agreements may include obligations regarding labour conditions, benefits such as parental leave, non-discriminatory labour practices, funding of women entrepreneurs, equal pay for equal work of equal value, promotion of under-represented groups in ownership of small and medium size enterprises, and participation of women in economic and development activities (WTO Database on gender provisions in Regional Trade Agreements).

This resolution aims to heighten awareness of the role of international trade agreements as structures to move the world to a more equitable and sustainable future for all peoples and the role civil society organizations such as GWI can have in ensuring agreements promote gender equality, the alleviation of poverty and welfare of all people.

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World Trade Organization. Action Plan on Trade & Gender 2021-2026 (January 31, 2021) https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/womenandtrade_a/action_plan_21-26.pdf

3. Draft Resolution - Preserving deep sea ecosystems

Proposed by: Canadian Federation of University Women

CFUW Seconded by: TBD

The 35th General Assembly resolves that:

1. National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments at all levels to:

- protect deep sea ecosystems in global coastal waters by declaring and/or extending a moratorium on deep seabed mining until research has been completed and a robust regulatory regime has been developed and implemented.
- fund and support credible short and long-term scientific research on deep sea ecosystems and how to regulate and preserve their biodiversity.
- work with other member countries, and in alignment with SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development to urgently press the International Seabed Authority to declare a precautionary pause on international deep seabed mining activities until comprehensive, science-based and enforceable seabed mining regulations are developed and implemented to protect deep sea ecosystems.

Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs:

1. In collaboration with other groups, when possible, raise awareness, promote and participate in the development of local strategies for the protection of the earth's deep seabeds.
2. Monitor the indicators of SDG 14 and the International Seabed Authority (ISA).
3. Actively participate in initiatives that focus on conservation of the oceans and marine ecosystems.
4. Advocate to their governments to expand and accelerate designation of marine protection areas related to deep sea mining.
5. Advocate with their local, regional and national departments of education to develop and implement school and post-secondary educational curricula on biodiversity of marine ecosystems and the implications of deep seabed mining.

Supporting Statement:

This resolution addresses the need to conserve and protect the oceans. Moratoriums, research, and regulatory frameworks are the tools closest-to-hand to ensure deep sea mining does not cause irreversible harm to the planet.

The ISA's mission is to regulate mining the international seabed for the benefit of humankind and to protect the ecosystem of the seabed, ocean floor and subsoil in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ISA, 2024; Egwu & Ramirez, 2023). Most deep seabeds lie in those international waters (Beiser, 2023). The Area (the international seabed area) and its resources are the common heritage of humankind. The Area covers around 54 per cent of the total area of the world's oceans. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an autonomous international organization established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1994 Agreement). ISA is the

organization through which States Parties to UNCLOS organize and control all mineral-resources-related activities in the Area for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Since 1994, ISA has approved eight exploration contracts in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans (Egwu & Ramirez, 2023). ISA has not yet authorized any commercial mining contracts as it deliberates over regulations amid global calls for a moratorium on deep sea mining (Beiser, 2023).

ISA's most pressing current issue is a loophole known as the two-year rule. In 2023, the International Seabed Authority missed the deadline to finalize and adopt deep seabed mining regulations. (Jackson & Karan, 2024) Before regulations are passed, a member nation has the authority to notify ISA that it wants to mine. This starts the two-year clock during which the ISA must develop regulations. If it fails to do so, the mining is implicitly approved (Beiser, 2023)

The ISA should be urged first to close this two-year loophole, and in the meantime, negotiate and enforce rules, regulations, and procedures to protect the deep sea environment, and to advocate for the conservation and restoration of the global oceans and their resources (Holst, 2023).

Much more research is needed to determine the long-term effect of deep sea mining and how it should be regulated (Gallagher, 2023). NGOs and governments have called for a moratorium until more is known about potential long term environmental impacts of seabed mining (Jarecki 2023). Research must be done into alternatives to mining metals for energy production, including through recovering metals from existing energy sources (Ashford *et al*, 2024; Mendenhall & Helm, 2024). The overarching issue will be how to protect these ecosystems while transitioning to new sources of energy (Chung *et al.*, 2023).

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4. Draft Resolution: Restore, preserve and protect global peatlands

Proposed by: CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women)

Seconded by: TBD

The 35th GWI General Assembly resolves that:

1. National Federations and Associations (NFAs) urge their respective governments to:
 - implement legislation/policies to protect and restore degraded peatlands and take immediate concrete steps to prevent further destruction of all peatlands
 - adhere to the principles of the Ramsar Convention Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (2002) to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise- use and management, those that remain
 - designate funding for research to urgently identify all peatlands in their countries and study how peatlands benefit our earth and its inhabitants
2. National Federations and Associations urge their respective governments and educational institutions to:
 - educate the public and protect peatlands in order to:
 - recognize that these ecosystems are ancient and irreplaceable
 - mitigate climate change
 - improve food and water security
 - reduce forest fire severity
 - enhance coastal management
 - decrease ecological concerns regarding peatlands' flora and fauna.
3. National Federations and Associations urge their respective governments and educational institutions to engage with industries such as, but not limited to, mining, forestry, road construction and urbanization to prevent direct or indirect damage to peatlands.

Suggested Plan of Action for NFAs:

Members may use any of the following suggested implementation strategies or other strategies to advance this resolution.

1. Promote education regarding the need to protect, restore and preserve, peatlands;
2. Promote the use of alternatives to peat in horticultural practices;
3. Monitor the indicators of SDG 13 Climate Action and SDG 15 Life on Land (protect, restore & promote sustainable use);
4. Identify any peatlands that exist in/near your community and the protections that exist to preserve them and actively participate in initiatives that focus on the conservation of peatlands;

5. Advocate to their governments to expand and accelerate the designation of protection areas related to peatlands, and;
6. Voice your opposition to mining developments that threaten peatlands

Supporting Statement:

This resolution addresses the urgent need to restore and protect global peatlands which are recognized as one of the most valuable ecosystems on the earth. They serve many functions

that positively affect the earth's systems, but most importantly they help regulate global climate (Ramsar, 2021). Peatlands are a type of wetland distinguished by the accumulation of slowly decomposing vegetation forming into layers of peat. They are neither solid ground, nor water, but something in between (Wilson et al, 2020). Located in every climate zone and continent, except Antarctica, peatlands cover 4.23 million square kilometers or 3% of the earth's surface (United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), 2022).

Like all wetlands, peatlands serve as natural filters, purifying water by trapping pollutants and storing organic matter. By regulating water flows, they help secure coastlines and prevent flooding. They perform a major role in providing and sustaining habitat, including critical migratory bird nesting areas, while they provide hunting grounds and food for a vast variety of flora and fauna {*Peatlands* n.d.}. This in turn supports inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture which provides livelihoods to millions (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2024). Peatlands similarly sustain forest ecosystems which then support plant and animal livelihoods.

But of all the wetlands, peatlands are the most critical to helping prevent climate change. Peatlands are the largest natural terrestrial carbon sink in the world, trapping and storing 30% of all land-based carbon (Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands, n.d.). When peatlands are drained or damaged, stored carbon is released into the air, becoming a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. When peat fires burn, sometimes for weeks, they release carbon and other toxic chemicals that have been underestimated in their contribution to negative climate change effect (Bosman, 2023). Peatland degradation increases the amount of dissolved organic carbon in water, giving it a brown colour and increasing the cost of water treatment (Landscape Finance Lab, 2024).

Peatlands are known to have a cooling effect on local climates during hot periods through cloud formation and evaporation (Heywood, 2023) and are of cultural significance to many Indigenous peoples (Harries 2021). Experts conclude that Indigenous women face the triple threat of climate change, biodiversity loss and gender inequality (Ecologic Development Fund, 2023). S. A. Thornton et. al make a compelling call for more women to engage in tropical peatland research.

Professional gardeners have long used peat; however, many gardeners have started to call for the use of alternatives and a ban on using peat in gardens (Heywood, 2023). Destruction of valuable peatlands occurring during extraction mining (Rutgers 2024), oil and gas exploration and other destructive projects (Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) News Release Dec 1, 2022) is well documented (Loisel and Gallego-Sala 2022).

Investing in peatland health will maintain valuable ecosystems and combat climate

change and GWI is well-positioned to advocate for the urgent action necessary to restore and protect global peatlands.

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