

Canada

Position Paper for the Economic and Social Council

Introduction

As a proud member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Canada upholds its mission to promote universal human rights and freedoms of persons through economic and social progress. Canada acknowledges the importance of enhancing international trade development, health, and gender equality for the welfare and peace of the global community. As stated on July 31, 2009 by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Mr. Sha Zukang at the closing of the 2009 ECOSOC Substantive Session, “ECOSOC can bring a whole range of actors to embrace the mission of empowering women and combating the worst forms of discrimination and abuse.”

I. Regulating Multinational Corporations in Free Trade Zones

As an interconnected world, it is of high importance to address the issue of regulating multinational corporations (MNCs) in free trade zones (FTZs) for the betterment of the global economy and social progress. Canada is alarmed by the destruction and exploitation caused by multinational corporations to the natural resources and persons of developing countries around the globe. Canada urges UN Member States to address the issue of multinational corporations in FTZs by retaining individual state sovereignty over their regulatory systems while upholding international standards that promote world progress. As such, Canada will continue to work diligently through the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, and the Community Economic Diversification Initiative, the Community Adjustment Fund, and the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CAF) in order to secure economic global partnership and sustainable development. At the Conference on Least Developed Countries, researchers revealed that poor countries lose about two billion dollars per day because of unjust trade rules—approximately fourteen (14) times the amount they receive in aid. Moreover, it is important to highlight that while 51 of the 100 largest economies in the world are corporations, the top 500 multinational corporations account for nearly 70 percent of the worldwide trade, and that this percentage had steadily increased over the past twenty years. As a concerned member of the international community with the need to regulate MNCs, Canada proposed a three-point plan titled **PDT: Promote, Dialogue and Transparency**. First, PROMOTE the guarding of human rights of workers and vulnerable populations in areas of free trade zones dominated and restricted by multinational corporations; then, use DIALOGUE between developed and developing Member States in order to secure environmental strength and sustainability from multinational corporate exploitation in order to prevent further destruction and abuse of natural resources and inhabiting populations; and finally, increase TRANSPARENCY between state governments, civil society and the private sector in order to avoid the violation of human rights and international standards of free trade. By recognizing the need to regulate multinational corporations in free trade zones, the international community can therefore begin to take steps forward to ensure long-term benefits of a globalized economy.

II. Improving Access to Healthcare in Developing States

Canada is concerned by the day-to-day struggle of persons living without adequate healthcare. Annually, HIV/AIDS claims more than 2.1 million lives and approximately 33.2 million are living with HIV/AIDS globally. Malaria, tuberculosis, avian influenza and other diseases and illnesses take the lives of millions of women and children each year when there is a lack of medical assistance, drastically inflicting upon child and maternal health. It is alarming that vitamin and mineral deficiencies alone are accountable for ten percent of global deaths. Canada acknowledges the health crisis that takes place in many underdeveloped countries, which still lack even the most basic healthcare for the population. It is imperative to highlight the 2008 UN resolutions A/RES/63/247 and A/RES/62/224, and the 2007 UN resolution A/RES/61/235, which urge the international community to ensure economic and social development of developing countries so as to make healthcare accessible to impoverished populations. Furthermore, Canada is a major contributor to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the Micronutrient Initiative, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, all of which support health management, donations of healthcare resources, and medical assistance. Canada has worked closely with the Africa Health Systems Initiative, which is a multilateral organization that devotes funding and initiatives that promote healthcare systems in Africa and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Through projects,

programs, and relevant research that aim to achieve the MDGs, Canada is fully committed in supporting African development and recognizes its tremendous debt to foreign aid, which prevents state governments from enacting affordable healthcare programs for its people. Canada fully supports debt forgiveness policies, including forgiveness of the official development assistance (ODA) debt, to spur economic growth and national investment in developing countries. At the Group of Eight (G8) summit in 2006, Canada announced its commitment to helping to provide funding for 10 years and ultimately providing up to \$450 million in aid. In keeping with this dedication, Canada proposes a three-point plan titled **CED: Collaboration, Education and Debt-Relief**. In order to help developing countries overcome problems with illnesses and diseases, COLLABORATION between state governments and the private sector is essential to ensure affordable prices of medical resources and access to health care. Second, it is essential to support the continuation of EDUCATIONAL programs that teach local communities on healthcare opportunities and prevention methods that promote health awareness and community building. And finally, promote the continuation of DEBT-RELIEF programs that secure national investment of medical resources so as to encourage medical advancement in particularly heavy indebted UN Member States. At the 2009 Global Health Forum, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made a statement that should be kept close to mind when looking at the global challenges the international community face: “At this time of global economic downturn, we face a crossroads. We can cut back on health expenditures and incur massive losses in lives and fundamental capacity for growth. Or we can invest in health and spare both people and economies the high cost of inaction.”

III. Increasing International Awareness to Promote Social Equality in Sexuality and Gender

When the needs and rights of women and girls are not represented, and are often overlooked and denied, governments further marginalize them from contributing and benefiting in social and economic progress. Canada acknowledges the urgency in achieving gender equality and enforcing the rights of women, as indicated by the anonymously adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDG) signed by all UN Member States. The first international agreement on human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) whose main author was a Canadian, John Humphrey, has since been followed by United Nations covenants on civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, such as the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that highlight the importance of securing women’s rights for the prosperity of the world. Women own fewer rights, lower education and health status, less income, access to resources and decision-making than men. Violence causes more death and disability worldwide amongst women aged 15 to 44 than war, cancer, malaria, or traffic accidents. Annually, two million girls worldwide are forced into marriage. Currently, there are only nineteen countries where women hold more than 30 percent of parliamentary seats, and globally, women hold a 17 percent share of parliamentary seats. In some parts of the world, inequality amongst women and men directly affects matters of life and death. It manifests itself in the form of abnormally high mortality rates of women and a consequential strengthening of men in the total population. Canada is fully committed to the work exercised at the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), which is a function of ECOSOC mandated by heads of states and governments at the 2005 World Summit to track progress of several UN entities, including work initiated to secure gender equality and the empowerment of women. Furthermore, Canada underscores the progress brought about through international documents, including ECOSOC UN resolutions 2007/33 (Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programs in the UN system), 2007/37 (Future Work to Strengthen the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women), and 2006/9 (Future Organization and Methods of Work of the Commission on the Status of Women), which emphasize the importance of achieving gender equality and the protection of the rights of women. In addition, Canada highlights the importance of Women Watch, the central gateway to information and resources that promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the United Nations, including the United Nations Secretariat, regional commissions, funds, programs, specialized agencies and academic and research institutions. As such, Canada proposes a three-point plan called **EAR: Enforce, Address, Respect**. It is necessary to ENFORCE international legislation that promotes the rights of women in order to highlight the urgency for world cooperation to end the plight of women. Second, it is imperative to ADDRESS women’s issues such as lower economic, social and political opportunities compared to men, through research and programs initiated in civil society. Finally, there must also be a concentrated and focused RESPECT towards women and their needs, as well as their human rights. By recognizing the need for serious reform, and giving it the attention that is required to fix the inequities, Canada seeks to promote and enthusiastically support the empowerment of women. As stated by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, “An important step has been made in strengthening the United Nations’ work in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as in ensuring the effective delivery of its operational activities for development.”