



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by BPW Spain (Federacion Internacional De Empresarias BPW Spain), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Priority theme: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs. In this context BPW Spain international business Federation, wants to promote the creation of a new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to help to empower women and girls and also promote sky protection. SDG 18 Sky Quality and Access to Starlight

Currently, the three main classes of threats to the quality of the night sky and to access to starlight are: artificial night light (ALAN), the emission of radio wavelengths and the contrails of satellites in Earth orbit. low (LEO).

The inappropriate and abusive use of outdoor lighting, especially in urban areas, makes it increasingly difficult to observe the night sky in its pristine magnificence. In addition, remote locations chosen to host the most sophisticated astronomical observatories because of their convenient location are gradually being threatened by light pollution, radio signal interference, and artificially induced climate modifications. Likewise, space debris is becoming a global problem due to its threat, especially to communications and security of Earth observation satellites and the study of climate change. More recently, a new additional negative impact on night sky observation has emerged, the mega constellations of LEO (earth orbit low) satellites.

85 per cent of the world's population lives under polluted skies. In contrast, more than thirteen hundred million inhabitants on the planet do not have access to electricity.

The advance of light pollution is erasing the stars from our skies, causing the deterioration of a legacy with profound cultural, scientific, environmental and aesthetic repercussions.

Over lighting has become a global phenomenon that affects most towns and cities. The inefficiency in lighting causes an unjustified excess of energy consumption and therefore economic and increases the level of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

Light pollution alters habitats, ecosystems, species, alters the biological cycles of plants and affects the relationships, orientation, reproduction and physiology of many animal species. And not only of wild life, but also of humans, linked to a circadian rhythm of hormones and biological variables dependent on day and night, activity and rest, where an imbalance of these factors directly affects our health, as corroborated by numerous studies by the World Health Organization.

Awareness in the protection of the night sky is awakening from the hand of tourism, in those spaces that have already begun to conserve and disseminate the night as a value, and that awaken in the individuals who visit them a perception of who we are, from a global point of view, a transversal axis to the whole of humanity, cultures and countries.

This perception of the sky as a resource to be safeguarded not only for science, but also as a cultural, environmental, biodiversity, health and quality-of-life heritage and as an engine of sustainable economy through star tourism, emanates from the Declaration of La Palma (2007) on "Defense of the Night Sky and the Right to Starlight" and its responsible body, the Starlight Foundation.

For its part, BPW Spain, an entity with consultative status with the United Nations, has always been strongly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals

of Global Compact. Focused on its fulfillment, from a gender perspective, to make equality and the empowerment of women and girls a reality.

The starry sky is an opportunity for development and empowerment for many women in rural settings that tend to be dramatically depopulated. Women from indigenous and local communities are often also repositories of traditional knowledge, which is critical to ensuring the livelihoods, resilience and culture of their communities.

For this, it is important to promote technological innovation to have intelligent lighting, without wasting energy, compatible with our sense of security, avoid radio electric pollution and regulate the use of outdoor space, making available to society all the resources and knowledge that heaven offers us.

It is recommended to look for examples of pre-existing legislation that have led to the improvement of other aspects of our environment like Clean Air Legislation and Clean Water Legislation, and explore whether or not there are parallels present for legislation that could protect the sky. Finally, the experts highlight the importance of encouraging the development of specific adaptations to the generic regulations and including local solutions as a key factor. Engaging diverse actors in finding solutions leads to more innovation with which to find new solutions to combat not only light pollution but the and the contrails of satellites in Earth orbit low (LEO).

It is necessary that the public in general, all of the inhabitants of populated areas, be aware of the need to preserve dark skies. City designing lighting is positive for women's urban experience. The findings show that sites with higher light levels are more likely to be perceived as unsafe sites – the average light level across these sites was twice what was measured across safe sites. This is a finding with the potential to radically change a city's approach to lighting for safety. We can use considered urban design as a tool for positive change.

In terms of economic actors, it is necessary to highlight the financial benefits to be gained by mitigating light pollution. In most cases, more efficient lighting means more efficient spending and lowered costs. In terms of security at night, there is a general misconception that light equates to safety and, consequently, that darkness equates to danger. But there is actually no direct relationship between dark skies and being unsafe. In fact, in some cases excessive lighting can create glare which decreases visibility and can ultimately be more harmful.

It has been shown that excess lighting can actually be toxic and damaging to people's health and that less lighting can lead to lowered CO2 emissions. Less lighting also protects animals who thrive in nocturnal environments.

The education of the general public could be achieved through the cooperation of all of the pre-existing organizations involved in environmental protection, as United Nations and Global Compact. Using this network, the reach of dark skies education would be significantly impactful.

We ask for the support of the Women's Social and Legal Convention in its sixty-sixth edition, to help us promote and give visibility to this new SDG (Sustainable Development Goal). The SDGs (Social development goals) do not contemplate the protection of the sky from an environmental point of view, and as women we have to consider the future of our planet and the consequences that a polluted and dark sky will bring us.