

**Oral statement  
by Joni van de Sand  
Global Co-coordinator and Advocacy Manager**

**MenEngage Alliance**

**General Discussion of the Commission on the Status of Women  
United Nations, New York City  
March 17, 2015**

Dear all,

“We live in a world of profound inequalities and unbalanced power relations, where rigid norms and values about how people should behave fuel and exacerbate injustices.” This is the opening line of the Delhi Call to Action, created by participants of the second MenEngage Global Symposium in New Delhi last November.

How and where to take it from here, 20 years after Beijing?

Thank you for giving MenEngage the opportunity to share some of the points laid out in the Delhi Declaration. And thanks to all delegates who are still in the room with us today to listen to NGOs delivering our statements.

This is a message to governments and the United Nations. It is also a pledge that we, the global MenEngage Alliance consisting of over 600 diverse civil society organizations, six regional and 33 country networks, will work on these issues. Internally with our members, and within our own structures and networks. And as partners with (other) women’s organisations and feminist groups. Please do hold us accountable for that.

No matter who or where we are, patriarchal norms and gender injustices make our relationships less fulfilling, less healthy and less safe. From an early age, they introduce suffering, violence, illness, hate and death to our families and communities. They strip us of our human rights and hinder our ability to live a life with love, dignity, intimacy and mutual respect. They hamper the development of our economies and keep our global society from flourishing. We need to overcome these immense threats to human wellbeing.

Patriarchy affects everyone, but in different ways. Women and girls continue to face significant, disproportionately high levels of gender injustice. Men and boys are both privileged and damaged by patriarchy, but are rarely aware of that fact. We need to acknowledge that gender inequalities are unacceptable, no matter who is affected.

We build on a precious heritage. We owe our awareness and knowledge to the pioneering work of feminist and women’s rights movements. We align with that work and acknowledge achievements in transforming societies. We continue our work with men and boys towards gender equality, informed by feminist and human rights principles, organisations and movements. In a spirit of solidarity.

There has been a lot of attention for engaging men and boys at this CSW. We welcome that. We welcome that the Political Declaration includes a paragraph. Overall, we hear a lot of excitement. However, projects are often small-scale and short-term. It is time to implement and scale-up. We are calling for institutionalization of work with men and boys in policies and programs – in schools, the work-place, and in creating an enabling environment at home.

Investments in engaging men and boys should not detract from other effective strategies, especially those undertaken by women's organisations. We reject attempts to weaken our alliances or to put complementary approaches in competition with one another. We call on policy makers and donors to dramatically increase the resources available for all gender justice work.

Gender inequalities are related to inequalities based on race, age, class, caste, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ability and other factors. We value the diversity of our world. We commit to promoting social and economic inclusion through meaningful participation, deepened partnerships, and joint actions among social justice movements.

Patriarchal power, expressed through norms of dominant masculinities, is among the major forces that drive structural injustices. We are particularly concerned about the manifestations of militarism and neoliberal globalisation: the proliferation of weapons; economic inequalities; violent manifestations of fundamentalisms; state violence; exclusion of and violence against civil society; human trafficking; and destruction of natural resources. We urgently need to expose the link between patriarchy and the exploitation of people and environment. And to help boys and men change their behaviour from "power over" to "power with".

The Post-2015 Development Agenda must embrace a human rights approach and transform unequal power relations. We believe that achieving gender justice requires engaging men and boys for the benefit of women and girls, men and boys themselves, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions. For a world that is just, safe and sustainable – for everyone.

We advocate for all of us to actively promote these principles and ensure that the new international development agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals, is just and inclusive.

Let me end with a quote that other MenEngage members have shared in panels over the past days:

"Men should not occupy feminist spaces. They should make the spaces they occupy feminist."

Thank you.