

## **Role of United Nations for Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights and gender equality on International Level**

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### **Abstract -**

Reaching to equal status of men and women and removing all sorts of discernment for women is among the primary aims of United Nations. Defilement of fundamental rights of women is a matter of concern worldwide. Women's rights do not get priority in many regions. A very well-drafted strategy is needed to confirm the practice of female's rights worldwide. We should thoroughly understand the major factors that cause discrimination against women and how we can eliminate them and ensure equality among all human beings irrespective of their gender.

The united nations have addressed women's human rights for many years. Their constant efforts have resulted in direction of progress of female's rights in many nations. Even after so many positive changes have taken place, lots of work is still yet to be done. Based on nationality, age, health status, ethnicity, education, marital status, socio-economic status, and other grounds, women get discriminated against in many parts of the world in their respective communities and societies. A country's development depends on women's social, political, and other vital structures. So, eliminating combating discrimination in all its forms is the first and foremost requirement for the development of humanity.

This paper highlights women's human rights, laws framed on an international level to protect and promote these rights, conferences that took place on a global level that proved to be a milestone in securing women's rights, and prime bodies of United Nations to work in this direction. This paper aims to get a thorough understanding of the present situation of Rights for women and significant challenges in practicing these rights. It paves the way for a more aware and conscious pool of human beings who can develop a safe, peaceful, and encouraging world for women.

### **1. INTRODUCTION –**

Females are almost half of the population of the whole world. However, even after manifold progress in human civilisation since its origin on earth, the position of females is still tragic. Many kinds of discrimination against females based on age, gender, religion, etc., are seen in many regions worldwide. Violation against women and girls is common in many countries. Although many social development agencies raise their voices against discrimination and

violence against women, such discrimination continues based on culture, tradition, custom, etc. This problem is not related to the specific country or region, but it spreads worldwide. United Nations has taken many firm steps against this inhuman behaviour against women, and many legal frameworks have been introduced to protect and promote women's rights. Right to education, equal pay, freedom of marriage, freedom of birth, and many such issues have been raised by United Nations for more than the last 70 years.

Due to all the steps taken by Un and its member states, including many non-governing bodies in the states, Today, it will not be wrong to say that the gender roles have somewhat become equal to what they used to be in the past. However, there is a long distance to cover yet till we reach the destination. Ever since historical times, women have dynamically contributed to the construction of society. Many women participated in the world wars although their works got no acknowledgment. Multiple waves of women's liberation which occurred from the past till today showed the involvement of women, and hence we should try and understand their significance. We have to create such society of harmony and equality where women are safe and nurtured.

## **2. INTERNATIONAL LAW ON WOMEN RIGHT PROTECTION**

United Nations has always worked to confirm alike rights for each human being notwithstanding their gender. The charter adopted in year 1945 by United Nations mentioned that one of its prime goals is "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, [and] in the equal rights of men and women." Human rights' universal declaration was accepted in 1948, which declared that males and females are eligible for equal human rights. Human Rights Commission started to draft two human rights treaties after the Universal declaration got accepted.

These two treaties were

- (i) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and
- (ii) The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Universal Declaration, along with mentioned two treaties forms the Human Rights International Bill. Both treaties declared the prohibition of all kinds of gender-based discrimination and certified equivalent rights for both men and women. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to life, liberty, and security of human beings and freedom from torture and slavery. This covenant also confirms equality in front of the law, liberty of movement, thought, integrity, religious conviction, and association. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights affirms the right to do work, to create trade unions. Human Rights related to health, marriage, parenthood, and safety of a child, suitable living standard, education, and culture and science are safeguarded in this covenant.

Member states approved the declaration of the abolishment of Discrimination against females of United Nations in 1967. This declaration mentioned that discernment against females is a crime against the dignity of humankind. This declaration instructed member states to eliminate prevailing discriminatory customs, laws, protocols which act against females.

States were also asked to create relevant laws to safeguard the equal and same rights of women and men. Later in 1979, the General assembly espoused The Resolution, which enunciated what sex-based discrimination means and its essential characteristics. It also advocated the abolition of discrimination by any Form against females. It covered the civil, economic, political, cultural, and social rights of women, together with the right to work, education, financial credit, health, right to cast vote, partake in public life, retain or change nationality Etc. It took vital consideration on problems like the trafficking of women.

States were held responsible for determining human rights practice and required amendments in present laws to ensure equality among all human beings. Convention suggested drafting new laws to affirm the prohibition of discrimination and legal protection of females' rights to refrain from discriminatory acts. States have been permitted to use social dealings to accelerate the equivalent status of females in all walks of life. Nevertheless, along with states, given convention invoked private actors also to eliminate gender-based discrimination.

### **3. REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON WOMEN RIGHT PROTECTION**

Regional treaties on human rights and international ones also cover necessary provisions to encourage and safeguard women's human rights. In 1981, African Unity's organisation approved "The African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights." Article 2 of this charter covers prohibition of discrimination in human rights-based on anything together with gender. A compulsion for African states to remove discrimination against females and preserve women and children's rights has been mentioned in Article 18 of the charter. Later in the year 2003, the protocol of charter on women's rights in Africa was accepted. Provision for no discrimination has been included in Article I of the American Convention on Human Rights and Chapter II of the American States Organisation Charter. The organisation accepted an inter-American Convention in 1994, which covered inhibition, reprimand, and the abolition of any violence against women.

Any discrimination, including the one based on gender, is prohibited in article 14 of the Convention of Europe on fundamental freedom and Human Rights. Since 1998 case of any violations of human rights, Individual is allowed to bring his/her complaint to the human rights court. Later in 2011, a new convention was accepted by the European council covering inhibition and combat of all forms of violence against women. Other political organizations in various regions, including the "Southeast Asian Nations association," "West African States Economic Community," and "the Southern African Development Community," have accepted resolutions, protocols to shield human rights for females and prevent violence against them.

### **4. GLOBAL CONFERENCES**

Many international conferences have been devoted to the subject of "Women's rights" and produced substantial commitments on a political level to guard and encourage Human rights for womenfolk, prevent violence, and ensure equality for them. The year 1975 has been recognised as international women's year. In this year, an international conference had been organised in Mexico. A world plan of action was drafted in this conference, and the period

year 1975 to 1985 was designated as United Nations Decade for females. Copenhagen city hosted an international conference on women in 1980. Convention was opened to sign in this conference which covered the abolition of discrimination against females. After the Copenhagen conference, next was held in Nairobi in 1982 where a committee formed with agenda to eliminate discrimination stated functioning. Astonishing activism on the part of females was observed in these three world conferences on international level, which paved the way for international conferences in the 1990s to discuss Female's rights. This conference was held in Beijing, capital of China in 1995 was Fourth World Conference on Women.

#### **4.1 VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

In 1993 Vienna hosted The World Conference on Human Rights, which was aimed to review the human rights machinery status. In this conference matter of violence against women was addressed, especially by civil society activists. They organized tribunals to raise the problem of women's rights violations. Before this conference, such matters were unaddressed as society considered them inseparable and standard parts of women's lives. As a result, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action were accepted at this conference. Which mentioned that "the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights?" The emphasis was placed on eliminating all sorts of violence based on gender. Prominently, the Programme of Action included "the eradication of any conflicts which may arise between the rights of women and the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices, and religious extremism."

#### **4.2 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In the year 1994, The Global Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo, which proved to be a milestone for women's rights. Issues connected to the Human rights of females were addressed here. Matters like gender equality, family, birth control, reproductive health, family planning, education, women's health, immigration were taken up by member states in the conference. Proceeding gender parity and justice and women empowerment, abolition of fierceness against females in any form, and confirming women's capability to regulate their productiveness was considered foundations of population and development-related programs. Women's reproductive rights were clearly stated in this conference. The conference considered to be noteworthy due to its wide and clear of reproductive rights mentioning that women have the right to decide the timing, number, and the gap between children, independently and sensible. They also possess the right to have information and sources for the same. Providing worldwide education, lessening of new-born, kid, and maternal death count; and guaranteeing general admittance to procreative health care and family planning, supported baby birth and inhibition of sexually spread diseases like HIV/AIDS, by year 2015 were set as the target in the plan of action.

#### **4.3 BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

In September 1995, Fourth World Conference on Women was hosted by Beijing, where the plan of action covered 12 areas related to women's rights and empowerment. Previous three

world conferences related to female's rights set the foundation for the Beijing conference. A significant achievement of this conference was to enunciate clearly that the rights of women are human rights. It embraced a sequence of strategic targets to abolish discrimination and establish equality among men and women in a plan of action.

#### **4.3 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

In the year 2000, the global community approved to achieve eight development targets by 2015, together with a target on gender parity and empowerment of women along with lessening rate of maternal mortality. The Millennium Development Goals set by the international community proved to be a significant political commitment that stimulated worldwide backing for a few of the world's most intimidating difficulties. Concerning women's rights, the objective of Millennium Development endorses gender equivalence and empowerment of women. Schooling of females and participation of women in the non-agricultural segment, wage employment, and countrywide parliaments are used as an gauge of gender equivalence.

Reduction in maternal death ratio by three quarters, in period of 25 years from year 1990 to 2015, was another vital objective of Millennium Development Goal. Universal Strategy for Women's and Children's Health was Introduced by Secretary-General in year 2010, highlighting the prime actions to advance women and children's health universally. Combining gender parity and human rights in the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda have been significant steps in attaining meaningful progress in promoting and protecting female's rights and advancing their partaking in social structure.

#### **4.5 UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

In the Sustainable development conference held in Brazil in 2012, chiefs of State, administration and Government of states addressed progress achieved in implementing agreements approved since the 1992 Conference of United Nations. In this momentous conference, "Rio+20", all member countries' political commitments for sustainable development were renewed. Countries set to create Sustainable development targets to get a more quantifiable approach and apply a better strategy for implementation. Member countries also established elevated political forums on sustainable development. Prominently, the states also confirmed their sincere commitment towards achieving equal status for women, their participation in the economy, politics, and social structure at leadership role with decision making authority and eliminating discrimination against women in a document named "The future we want." The outcome document mentioned that sustainable development could only be possible by ensuring an environment of freedom and equality for women and their active participation in all aspects. It emphasized the imperative requirement in the state's legal framework amendment to repeal all such laws or rules that hamper women's development. It also advocated affirmation of access to justice for females.

## **5. UNITED NATIONS BODIES –**

### **5.1 THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND ITS MECHANISMS**

The United Nations' primary intergovernmental unit is named Human Rights Council, which works to promote and safeguard human rights. General assembly elected 47 States which collectively made the Human Rights Council in 2006. Ladies' rights and gender equality used to be addressed by this council frequently since its inception. The council also calls special sessions to address the violation of human rights or other related emergencies. The council establishes a commission to conduct an inquiry in case of violation of women's rights laws. A review of the status of human rights in member states takes place every four and half years to assess the progress or deviations.

### **5.2 THE SECURITY COUNCIL**

The United Nations Security Council has taken up multiple resolutions covering women's rights, security, and peace. Resolution 1325 was accepted by the Security Council universally in 2000, asking for amplified contribution of females in all facets of resolution and prevention of conflict. Council also showed gender viewpoint in all United Nations security and peace efforts and the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements. Security Council also accepted goals to prevent ferocity against womankind in the context of armed conflict whereas at the same time distinguishing females' imperative role in maintaining peace.

### **5.3 THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

In 1946, United Nations Economic and Social Council established The Commission on the Position of females by determination 2/11 to make commendations and reports on encouraging right of females in economic, political, educational, social, and civil sectors. This Commission recommends crucial difficulties related to women's rights and immediate attention on them. In the yearly meeting, the Commission approves conclusions on priority tasks decided for next year. Evaluation of progress achieved in the previous year, unachieved targets, challenges are included in the decided conclusion. It also gives recommendations for Governments, Civil society, international establishments, and other participants. The Commission also approves resolutions on many females' rights-related subjects. The active contribution of Commission in endorsing and encouraging females' rights, by the agreement on the Removal of All Methods of Discrimination and Violence against Womankind and Beijing Declaration and Plan to act.

## **6. WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN PRACTICE –**

### **6.1 WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN POLITICAL LIFE AND PUBLIC LIFE**

The right to participate in the country's government is a fundamental human right as per the universal Human rights declaration. 7<sup>th</sup> Article in the 1952 Convention on Political Rights of Females confirms that women can cast a vote in all kind of elections. Women are also entitled for election to all overtly elected bodies, partake in the construction of government plan and policy and their operations. Declaration clarifies that women may take charge of public office, can execute all public jobs at all stages of government. They also possess the

right to contribute in public associations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the country. The mentioned convention also declared in Article 8 that member states have to take all suitable actions to guarantee the opportunity to women to represent their government on equal terms with men at the global level and to contribute in the intercontinental organizations work.

### **6.2 WOMEN'S RIGHTS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and Elimination of Discrimination against Women have mentioned explicitly that females' reproductive and sexual well-being comes under women's right to health. This means that states are responsible for safeguarding, respect, and realize sexual and reproductive well-being right of women. On the right to health, The Special Rapporteur upholds that female is permitted to reproductive health-care services, facilities and goods that are accessible in suitable count, good quality available economically and physically, without any discrimination.

### **6.3 WOMEN'S RIGHT AND SATISFACTORY LIVING STANDARD**

Women's rights to property, land, water, food, cleanliness, social security, and work are related to their right to attain an acceptable living standard. International Law on human rights guarantees all these mentioned rights and the right to enjoy these rights without discrimination.

### **6.4 WOMEN'S RIGHTS AGAINST VIOLENCE–**

In human rights treaties, much attention has been given to violence against females since the commencement of the 1990s. Violence against females has been defined in the declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women. It clarifies that any action related to gender-based violence which consequences in, or is possible to consequence in, psychological, sexual, or physical suffering to females, together with coercions of such actions, threat, or unreasoned deficiency of authority in private or public life.

### **6.5 WOMEN'S RIGHTS FOR MIGRANTS**

World's total migrant population comprises 50% female migrants and in developed countries count of female migrants is more than males. Both positive and negative consequences are there of female migration. It comprises a considerable possibility to develop equality of gender through empowering migrant women, as various migrate working as the chief breadwinners for the families nowadays. Though, migration may upsurge susceptibilities and may put migrant women in danger of exploitation, violence, and discrimination. General assembly achieved a vital breakthrough with acceptance of international convention in 1990 which covered Fortification of All workers' rights who are migrants along with rights of their family members. This resolution restates that irrespective of migration status, all persons have human rights both in regular and irregular conditions, as mentioned in major human rights treaties. This convention held states responsible for ensuring that the condition of migrants in an unstable situation does not persevere. The state should inform migrants and especially females about their rights. This convention advocated the abolition of

discrimination in all possible forms against migrant women and to give them the status of equality with men.

## **6.6 WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN CRISES AND CONFLICTS**

Womankind have been facing violating acts such as sexual slavery, rape, forced impregnation, miscarriages, kidnapping, trafficking, sexual abuse, and other gender-based crimes. The fourth Geneva Convention raised the requirement of the distinct shield of females against any outbreak on their honour like imposed prostitution, rape, or any mode of offensive assault. Wartime rape and sexual violence have been proposed by the global criminal tribunal for Yugoslavia and Rwanda to be considered a deed of torture, war crimes, integral acts of genocide, or misconduct against humanity. Ferocity against womenfolk both in conflict and post-conflict can be considered as discrimination against women in peacetime.

## **6.7 WOMEN'S RIGHT FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

Access to justice is required to make sure that women can enjoy their rights without any hinge or discrimination and raise objections in case of violation of any kind in the practice of females' rights. International law for human rights gives women access to justice similar to men as one of their fundamental rights as mentioned in articles 2.3 and 26 of the Global Treaty on Political and Civil Rights. The Agreement on the Abolition of All kind of Discrimination against Womenfolk mentioned that the state must protect females' rights with the help of competent national tribunals and other public institutions. Remarkable growth has been achieved worldwide in revising and redrafting laws that discriminate against women. Efforts have been made in writing constitutions that integrate assurances of equality and non-discrimination for women. A fundamental requirement for women to access justice is a legal and constitutional agenda that promises females' rights at the countrywide level.

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