



Statement by H.E. Bob Rae (Canada)

President of the Economic and Social Council

69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women

10 March 2025

Excellencies,
Distinguish Delegates,
Champions of Gender Equality,
Dear friends,

We stand at a defining moment, and I proud to be here alongside such an inspiring Indigenous woman, Loretta Jeff-Combs.

We find ourselves at a moment where hard-won progress for gender equality is at risk of unraveling. But this is not just a moment of **crisis**, it is also a moment of **choice** – a moment to reaffirm our commitment and reclaim the path toward a more just and equal world.

We have seen progress and we must recognize this. Countries have strengthened laws and adopted policies to advance gender equality. More women and girls have access to education. and there is growing recognition of the need **to address barriers to women’s economic empowerment, and to eliminate gender-based violence.**

These steps matter. But... to be frank, they are **not enough**, and the fight for equality continues.



The **hard truth** is this: we are **not only at risk of stagnation—we are at risk of reversal**, as we face growing pushback against gender equality.

For nearly eight decades, the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** has been the driving force behind global gender equality efforts. It has served as a crucial platform for governments, civil society and international organizations to advance commitments, exchange best practices and drive policy change. It has ensured that the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**—the most visionary agenda for gender equality—remains a touchstone for progress.

Excellencies, colleagues, and friends,

At this 69th session of CSW, marking 30 years since Beijing, it is not enough for us to just reflect on progress—we have to ignite the momentum to ensure that gender equality remains at the core of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

The world is watching us. Women and girls everywhere are looking to these meetings, to this Commission, to the United Nations itself, to not only to talk about solutions but **to deliver solutions that protect their rights, expand their opportunities, and secure their futures**.

Let us be clear – gender equality is not just a goal; it is in fact the foundation of a just and sustainable world. It is both a standalone commitment that we have in SDG 5 but is also the driving force behind the entire 2030 Agenda. We will not achieve the 2030 Agenda until we achieve true gender equality, equality between women and men. We have an obligation here, every day, to push back against regression, to stand united against injustice, and to chart a course that is bold, ambitious, and unwavering in its pursuit of gender equality.

As President of the Economic and Social Council, and as Ambassador of Canada, I am very committed to this work. And I reaffirm ECOSOC's unwavering support for the Commission on the Status of Women and its efforts to drive progress for all women and girls worldwide.



History will not judge us by the challenges we faced, rather, it will judge us by the courage with which we confronted these challenges. We have an obligation to rise to the moment and we have an equal obligation to deliver on the promise of equality.

You know, when you think about it, the arguments that we hear against this agenda for equality, this argument has never changed. It has never changed. The argument is constantly a very simple one and goes across language, culture, religion, and politics; it is a language that says "women must know their place."

Well, I have news for those people who make that argument. Women's place is here, it's there, it's everywhere and it's anywhere. That is the place of women in our society!

Thank you very much, merci beaucoup.