STATEMENT

UPR Pre-session on PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PNG)

Geneva, 25TH AUGUST 2026

Delivered by: PNG BUSINESS COALITION FOR WOMEN INC

Thematic Area: Gender-based Violence and Women's Rights

Last Recommendation: 144.17;144.19;144.130;144.132

BCFW OVERVIEW

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Papua New Guinea Business Coalition for Women (BCFW), a not-for-profit organisation established by the private sector to address gender inequality and safety of women in Papua New Guinean (PNG) workplaces. This is the first time for the organisation to take part in the UPR Pre-session. This statement examines the prevalence of sexual harassment in workplaces in PNG and the extent to which the country has implemented relevant recommendations accepted during the Third Cycle.

DRAFTING OF THE REPORT

This statement is based on a legislation review, policy documents, parliamentary reports, BCFW published research, media reports, and publicly available information.

STATEMENT PLAN

The statement addresses the issue of violence in the world of work, with a specific focus on sexual harassment.

STATEMENT

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

In the previous review, many countries gave recommendations to PNG on Gender-based Violence (GBV), and Women's rights (144.132,144.130,144.17,144.19), however, there were no explicit recommendation regarding sexual harassment or violence in the world of work. While GBV and women's rights continue to be a challenge for PNG, with ongoing government interventions to address those issues, sexual harassment in the world of work remains a critical gap in current interventions, particularly in the labour law of the country. Sexual harassment at the workplace is not addressed explicitly in PNG's Employment Act 1978.

New Development Since the Last Review

Despite the absence of specific recommendations on workplace violence in the previous UPR, PNG has made progress in addressing GBV and women's rights. Key initiatives include support for safe houses through the National GBV Secretariat,

funding for GBV programmes implemented by civil society organisations, and increased political attention to these issues. PNG's Medium-Term Development Plan IV (2023-2027) also identifies *Population, Youth and Women Empowerment* as a strategic priority area, recognising the importance of women's participation in national development and economic growth. While these efforts demonstrate commitment to advancing women's rights and addressing GBV, a significant gap remains in tackling violence in the world of work, particularly sexual harassment.

Current Situation

Earlier this year, BCFW conducted a survey across 7-member organisation representing diverse industries in PNG. A total of 776 individuals participated in the survey, including 432 women and 332 men, while 52 individuals identified themselves as persons with disabilities. 16.3% of employees surveyed reported experiencing sexual harassment in their current workplace while 46.1% had witnessed or been informed about incidents occurring in their workplace. The survey found that women were disproportionately affected, with 20.1% reporting experiences of sexual harassment compared to 10.9% of men. The survey further found that more than half of the victims did not report incidents due to concern about losing job, fear of retaliation, being threatened or pressured not to report, and concern about damaging relationships (BCFW, 2026). This highlights persistent barriers to access to justice and workplace safety, and accountability.

Workplace sexual harassment remains a significant but underreported issue in PNG. In 2022, a senior government official was convicted on three counts of sexually harassing three female employees in a government department *(Post Courier, 2022)*. The case illustrates how power imbalances can expose women to abuse and underscores the urgent need for stronger legal protections, reporting systems, and employer accountability.

Additionally,PNG’s legal framework provides limited protection against workplace violence and harassment, with weak penalties, fragmented sector-specific coverage, inadequate protection against gender-based discrimination, and no effective provisions addressing the workplace impacts of domestic violence as required under ILO Convention 190 (C190).

Recommendations

We strongly urge that sexual harassment at the workplace be mentioned in the upcoming UPR, with highest priority to amend the Employment Act 1978, and include sexual harassment provisions. We therefore recommend that the government of PNG: Reform the employment act to include sexual harassment provisions.

a) Include a definition on sexual harassment in the Employment Act
b) Clearly outline the employer’s obligation to address sexual harassment
c) Establish a reporting mechanism to report incidents of sexual harassment that occurs in workplaces.

Thank you for your consideration and attention.