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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 Afrikanische Frauenorganisation, European Union of Women, Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Graduate Women International (GWI), International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International Inner Wheel, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and International Movement of Catholic Students), Servas International, Soroptimist International, and World Union for Progressive Judaism, non-governmental organizations 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

The feminisation of poverty is a global phenomenon affecting women and girls of all ages and in all areas of life. The accelerated achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women is necessary to enable all women to live in conditions that secure their existence and enable them to reach their potentials.

The UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) 2023 Gender Snapshot Report revealed that current trends would leave more than 340 million women and girls – an estimated 8 per cent of the world’s female population – in extreme poverty by 2030. The report showed that only two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators aimed at women’s equality were “close to target” and none were at the “target met or almost met” level.

According to the report, today one of every ten women is living in extreme poverty. If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated eight per cent of the world’s female population – 342.4 million women and girls – will still be living on less than \$2.15 a day. Most (220.9 million) will reside in sub-Saharan Africa. In 30 per cent of countries, the extreme poverty rate among women and girls in 2030 is projected to exceed 11 per cent, equivalent to the global poverty rate in 2015 when the global goals were adopted. Gender gaps in poverty are highest among those aged 25 to 34. Women of this age group are more likely to live in extreme poverty than their male counterparts.

Achieving zero poverty for all women and girls by 2030 will require acting on long-standing gender disparities, including in access to land, health care, family planning, education and the labour market. Gender-responsive social protection is essential, as is combating gender-based discrimination that limits women’s participation in leadership and decision-making. The dearth of sex-disaggregated data is a major constraint for policymakers and gender equality advocates. Among countries with recent official statistics on monetary poverty, only 42 per cent have poverty data disaggregated by sex. Where data are disaggregated, large gender gaps are evident.

Material poverty is compounded by time poverty: the absence of available time after deducting time for paid employment and unpaid care work, study or other basic necessities of life. Multitasking by women often leads to depletion, leaving them exhausted by their multiple roles and unable to secure a decent life for themselves. Time poverty deprives women of the possibility to ensure decent working conditions, financial autonomy, training, or access to resources and services necessary for a healthy life, and leaves women unable to participate fully in their communities and societies.

Women are not participating equally and fully in the economy. According to the Gender Snapshot Report, globally less than two thirds of prime working-age women (aged 25 to 54) were in the labour force in 2022 compared to over 90 per cent of prime working-age men. In 2019, for each dollar men earned in labour income, women earned only 51 cents. In 2019, women’s share of total earned labour income was a mere 34 per cent.

Occupational segregation, part-time jobs, career interruptions, unpaid care work, gender stereotypes that make it more difficult for women to enter well paid jobs, gender barriers for women in science, technology and innovation, and the “glass ceiling” cement economic and social inequalities across the life course of women.

During the Covid pandemic, women lost their jobs faster and in greater numbers than men. In times of lockdowns, many societies expected that women take care of

the children at home when schools were closed. Unpaid care responsibilities increased for women in families.

It is therefore important to undertake measures to speed progress, including closing gender imbalances in employment, promoting pay transparency, and supporting working parents through providing affordable child care and paid family leave for mothers and fathers.

According to the Gender Snapshot Report, women aged 55 to 59 are more likely to live in extreme poverty than men due to more career interruptions, part-time employment, lower earnings and more time spent on unpaid care responsibilities. Women enjoy universal access to pensions in only 56 out of 116 countries with data. In 47 countries, women's pension coverage is not universal and lags behind men's.

The Gender Snapshot Report reveals that when girls enroll in school, their completion rates consistently surpass those of boys in primary and lower secondary education. Yet millions of girls never enter school or never complete their education, especially in conflict-affected areas. Globally in 2022, 32 per cent of women aged 15 to 24 were not in education, employment or training, double the rate of young men. An estimated 110 million girls and young women will be out of school in 2030. Functional literacy is important for those women who have no chance to attend school.

Causes for girls not to enter school or to leave school earlier include unpaid care-work, domestic responsibilities and an undersupply of decent job opportunities disrupting the school-to-work transition for young women. Less education is another factor that pushes women into low paid jobs. Scholarships and other supports for those pursuing education or other opportunities to build skills are necessary to close gender gaps.

Armed conflicts are escalating around the world. War, organized violence and armed conflict destroy lives, displace people and devastate infrastructure, buildings, roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. Women and girls are often exposed to violence, rape and torture. They lose their homes and see their future often only in migration to places where there is peace and development. A high number of women and girls are displaced inside or outside their home country. Many of them experience violence or rape en route or in refugee centers.

According to the Gender Snapshot Report, 614 million women and girls lived in conflict-affected contexts in 2022, 50 per cent more than in 2017. Women and girls in such settings face acute poverty, food insecurity and an elevated risk of violence, including domestic violence. Their prospects for education and employment are severely constrained. In 2023, women and girls in extremely fragile countries and regions are 7.7 times more likely than those in other contexts to live on less than \$2.15 a day. Women must be equal partners in peace building. They should have decisive functions in peace building processes and negotiations.

Climate change is a perpetual threat to the world, and women and girls suffer disproportionately. The Gender Snapshot Report reveals that between 2000 and 2019, flooding events globally caused \$650 billion in economic losses, affecting 1.7 billion people and resulting in over 100,000 deaths. By mid-century, under a worst-case climate scenario, climate change may push up to 158.3 million more women and girls into poverty. Food insecurity is projected to affect 236 million more women and girls. A recent review of national climate action plans found that only 55 have specific climate adaptation measures referring to gender equality and only 23 recognize women as agents of change in accelerating progress on climate commitments. It is important to include women immediately in decision-making positions in climate action planning and implementation.

Austerity measures impact women first and most negatively. The losers of these measures are women, who become unemployed or are pushed into part-time jobs with lower incomes and subsequently lower pensions.

The undersigned non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna, call upon the United Nations Member States to:

Ensure that women are able to participate equally and fully in the economy;

- Make transparent gender budgets and show them publicly;
- Close gender pay gaps and ensure equal pay for equal work;
- Remove barriers for women to work in science, technology and innovation;
- Increase the availability and quality of child care institutions up to school age to enable women to work full time;
- Open doors to secondary and tertiary education for women and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds; provide scholarships and special programs for girls' education amid poverty; invest in education for disadvantaged women and girls;
- Ensure that women are equal partners in peace building, and reallocate military expenditures to investments in peace, reconciliation and sustainable development;
- Include women in decision-making positions in climate action planning to participate in climate disaster prevention and the design of strategies for a sustainable, safe and healthy future for our planet.

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