



## Economic and Social Council

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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 Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Loreto Generalate, International Presentation Association and VIVAT International, 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 world of work is experiencing vertical change. Skyrocketing use of technology, social media, greater connectivity, global markets, virtual offices, robotics, collaboration, social entrepreneurship, collective solution-seeking, and unprecedented numbers of persons on the move contribute to an ever-evolving work arena. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Goals, Beijing+20 Review, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (particularly Goals 3, 4, 5 and other interlinked goals), and the New York Declaration have stimulated much progress with regard to women, girls, and economics. However, while work trends quickly morph, there remain outdated laws and practices, with restrictive social, business, financial, economic, and cultural norms, that hinder women's full realization of economic empowerment. We raise our voices so that they will not be "left behind" in the changing world of work.

### **OUR EXPERIENCE**

Our organizations represent around 45,000 members world-wide with an outreach to millions. They minister at the grassroots level where women and girls experience the effects of poverty, discrimination, lack of education and opportunity, protracted conflict and violence, climate change, corruption, disruption, traditional views of women's roles, corruption and maltreatment while on the move as refugees and migrants. According to the International Labour Organization, persons living in poverty represent 30 per cent of the world's population, but receive only 2 per cent of the world's income. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty.

Women are very insightful about solutions. They often identify resources available and have an innate capacity to raise innovative solutions to overcome economic challenges. In various parts of the globe, women are taking collective action to address factors restricting them from emerging out of poverty and achieving their human right of gender equality in the work world. For example, women in Burkina Faso earn income through soap-making, raising goats, and similar small businesses. In Nigeria, persons with disabilities, including women and girls, established a kerosene sales entity and a shop. Women living in poverty in India create small enterprises through microfinancing. What often enables them to achieve success is their self-determination, along with assistance in start-up capital, combined with training in business, management, and marketing.

### **OUR CONCERNS**

#### **EDUCATION**

Underpinning decent and sustainable work is quality, affordable education (Sustainable Development Goal 4). While progress has been made in this area, data shows that an estimated 60 million girls were out of school in 2013. Positive attitudes towards girls' education must be promoted, and finances and resources to render quality education for them must expand. Every effort must be exerted to encourage girls to pursue tertiary education. Community colleges can provide quality, lifelong education, thus giving opportunities for decent jobs. For example, a community college in India, directed by one of our organizations, provides rehabilitation, life skills education, and vocational training to female high school

drop outs who have experienced early marriage, domestic violence, depression, etc. They now have respect and can take care of educating their children, care for elderly parents, and have dignity and status in society.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET**

The work milieu has become digital and technological. Building skills in this capacity is vital to women's empowerment. It is essential that women living in least developed countries have access not only to technology, but also to affordable internet services if they are to advance in this area.

### **REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

Women and girls in transit as refugees and migrants, or internally displaced persons, typically face a hiatus in work due to their departure from home. They are also subject to assault, robbery, murder, sexual abuse, extortion, and a lack of educational opportunities en route. Commitments voiced in the New York Declaration related to protecting the safety of migrants and refugees, particularly women and girls, and to providing meaningful educational opportunities for those in transit, must be implemented immediately. We recognize that women in transit often organize their own support groups and enterprises, but Member States must offer opportunities for education, relevant language, and work/trade skills, so that they may better participate in the economic advancement of themselves and their receiving countries.

### **UNEQUAL WAGES**

Women in most countries earn on average only 75 percent of men's wages. Unpaid domestic work and working in informal sectors affect the figure. Women work 1 to 3 hours more per day on housework than men. In Asia, over 80 percent of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment, in Sub Saharan Africa, 74 percent, and in Latin American and the Caribbean, 54 percent. If women's human rights are to be upheld, and women are to acquire full and productive employment and decent work for all (Sustainable Development Goal 8), Member States must step up efforts to achieve equal pay for equal work. Member States further must value and recognize unpaid work in statistics and policies, and ensure affordable, quality health care and child care for working women.

### **RESOURCES, INHERITANCE AND LAND**

Women's livelihoods depend on their rights to natural resources in developing countries. Data indicate that women produce over half the world's food. A few countries promulgated laws that allow women to own or lease land. Ownership and control of rural and urban land are essential for women to attain financial independence, especially in countries where patriarchal systems are still the norm. Patriarchal systems dictate the line of succession regarding property and resources. Legislation on inheritance is typically partial to men. Even in countries with laws that permit women to inherit, customary laws and social pressure is put on women to forgo their inheritance rights, lest they risk social exclusion.

## **SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS**

While many women work and earn an income, we are concerned about women and girls who live in dire poverty or may not be able to work because of aging, disability, or for other reasons. Because children experience greater mobility, elderly women increasingly find acquiring income, housing, and care challenging. Disabled women and girls face discrimination and multiple other challenges in acquiring work. Social protection floors are a pressing need in every nation.

## **LEGAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDERS**

According to UN Women, 128 of 143 countries feature at least one legal difference restricting women's economic opportunity, in 8 countries have at least ten or more legal differences. Fifteen have laws which enable husbands to object to their wives working and prevent them from accepting jobs. Restrictions must be removed to empower women.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTING LIVELIHOOD**

Many women's livelihood is impaired by climate change. Climate change causes dramatic weather patterns which require adaptation. Women living in locations adversely affected by climate change require training in new types of jobs related to adaptation.

## **OUR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Support and collaborate with non-governmental and civil society organizations that provide opportunities for life long education, particularly with training in business, management and marketing
- Establish and support alternate systems of education which facilitate horizontal and upward mobility of women and girls, and that empower them and their communities to move out of poverty
- Enact and enforce policies and laws to ensure that women and girls have access to technology, quality education, and training which prepares them for a contemporary work force, including jobs related to climate-change adaptation
- Change the narrative on gender roles and stereotypes at all levels to ensure the human right to gender equality
- Protect women (and men) in conflict and migration situations and promote equal access to education related to available jobs in their host country
- Invest in creating sustainable jobs with related, affordable health and child care benefits, and create infrastructure for affordable internet access
- Ensure that equal opportunities are afforded to women with equal pay for equal work and recognize and include unpaid domestic care/work as an economic contribution of women
- Enact and enforce laws and policies which provide equal rights to land, resource ownership, inheritance, and access to finance
- Implement mandatory universal social protection floors

- Remove legal and cultural restrictions which prevent women from working or accessing jobs, or restrict them from access to economic opportunities

Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals is only possible with the resolve and greater political will of the United Nations and Member States to ensure that no one is left behind, especially women and girls.

Endorsed by:

International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

International Association of Charities

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