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Women and girls and the response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

The General Assembly,

Recognizing the significance of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, and recalling the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference,¹ the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly² and the political declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women,³ as well as the International Conference on Population and Development and its review conferences,

Reaffirming the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and also that all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against women and girls, are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁴ the International Covenant on

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

² Resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

³ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 7 (E/2020/27)*, chap. I, sect. A.

⁴ Resolution [217 A \(III\)](#).



Civil and Political Rights,⁵ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁶ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,⁷ the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁸ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁹ and other human rights instruments, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,¹⁰

Recalling the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, held in New York on 23 September 2019, and reaffirming its political declaration, entitled “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”,¹¹

Recalling also the high-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in New York on 1 October 2020, which demonstrated the commitment of the international community to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

Recalling further that 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on 31 October 2000 and the establishment of the women and peace and security agenda,

Recalling its resolutions [74/270](#) of 2 April 2020 on global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and [74/274](#) of 20 April 2020 on international cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19, on the global COVID-19 response, resolution [74/306](#) of 11 September 2020 on the comprehensive and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resolution [74/307](#) of 11 September 2020, entitled “United response against global health threats: combating COVID-19”,

Recognizing the primary responsibility of Governments to adopt and implement responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that are specific to their national context, and that emergency measures, policies and strategies put in place by countries to address and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 must be targeted, necessary, transparent, non-discriminatory, time-bound, proportionate and in accordance with their obligations under applicable international human rights law, and reaffirming the obligation of States in this regard, in accordance with article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Recognizing also the fundamental role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating the comprehensive global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the central efforts of Member States therein, recalling the constitutional mandate of the World Health Organization to act, inter alia, as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, and recognizing its key leadership role within the broader United Nations response and the importance of strengthened multilateral cooperation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its extensive negative impacts,

Noting with concern the impact on health, safety and well-being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has spread all around the globe and risks slowing down the progress made on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the past decades,

⁵ See resolution [2200 A \(XXI\)](#), annex.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

⁸ Ibid., vol. 1577, No. 27531.

⁹ Ibid., vol. 2515, No. 44910.

¹⁰ Resolution [61/295](#), annex.

¹¹ Resolution [74/2](#).

Reaffirming the right of every human being, without distinction of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,

Recalling, in this regard, that the enjoyment of this right is vital to women's and girls' life and well-being and women's ability to participate in all areas of public and private life,

Recalling also that the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation are derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and are inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity,

Alarmed by the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities that perpetuate all multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, as well as racism, stigmatization and xenophobia, and sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and put women and girls at particular risk, compounding and further exposing vulnerabilities in the social, political and economic spheres which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic on the full and equal enjoyment of human rights, and which are exacerbated for women and girls throughout their life course, and recognizing that all national responses must ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination of any kind,

Expressing concern about the spread of disinformation and misinformation, including on the Internet, about the pandemic, and stressing the importance of disseminating accurate, clear and evidence- and science-based information, bearing in mind the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the freedom to seek, receive and impart information,

Expressing concern also that the current COVID-19 pandemic and its deep and widespread social and economic effects is increasing the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking in persons, exploitation and abuse, and welcoming the efforts of Member States, United Nations agencies, international organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and financial institutions to address the problem of trafficking in persons,

Recognizing the critical role of and efforts made by health workers, 70 per cent of whom are women, and other front-line and essential workers, including humanitarian personnel, around the world aimed at addressing the pandemic through measures to protect the health, safety and well-being of people, and emphasizing the importance of providing health and other essential workers with the necessary protection and support,

Concerned that the increased demand for paid and unpaid care work, which is more often undertaken by women than by men, the unequal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men and job losses by women, combined with the decreasing accessibility and affordability of childcare, are deepening the already existing gender inequalities in the division of labour and could further exacerbate the gender pay gap, the pension gap as well as the care gap, and noting with concern in this regard the increased and unequal share of unpaid care and domestic work placed on girls, including adolescent girls, which needs to be addressed,

Concerned also by the high incidence of informal and non-standard forms of employment where women are disproportionately represented as this can restrict women's universal access to social protection when entitlements are tied closely to formal employment, which can perpetuate women's lack of income or force women to continue working thus exacerbating the risk of exposure to COVID-19,

Recognizing that civil society, including non-governmental organizations and women's and community-based organizations, youth-led and girl-led organizations, and all other stakeholders such as volunteers and national human rights institutions where they exist, and women peacebuilders in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict often provide the front-line contributions of the response to the pandemic in communities and remain critical during its aftermath,

Deeply concerned by the increased violence against women and girls in the current context of confinement measures, and emphasizing the need for strengthened prevention and response mechanisms,

Stressing the importance of the use of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data disaggregated by, sex, age, disability and other characteristics relevant in national contexts as an essential tool for the design, implementation and evaluation of effective policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath,

Concerned by the devastating risks caused by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, where social cohesion is already undermined and institutional capacity and services are limited,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to fully respect and implement their obligations under international human rights law and existing commitments with respect to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including those contained in the outcome documents and reviews of relevant international conferences, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹² the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,¹³ and stresses that there is no place for any form of discrimination, racism, stigmatization and xenophobia in the response to the pandemic;

2. *Emphasizes* the critical role that women play in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and urges Member States, the United Nations system and regional organizations, and other relevant actors to strengthen women's leadership and to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and, when appropriate, women's organizations in decision-making processes and in all stages of response to COVID-19, as well as in recovery processes, and to continue to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, including those approved during the pandemic, including in budgetary responses;

3. *Also emphasizes* the need to develop economic recovery plans that drive change towards inclusive societies by, inter alia, targeting all women and girls, especially those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence, underlining that economic response, including poverty eradication measures, social assistance and protection, and fiscal and stimulus packages, must be equally accessible to all, be gender-responsive and specifically address the care sector and the issues of informal and non-standard forms of employment, and recognize and take measures to reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and consider focusing on actions regarding financial inclusion for women, equal pay for work of equal value and career opportunities, as well as women's leadership and female entrepreneurship and ensure women's participation in economic activity, as this is key to sustainable economic recovery;

¹² Resolution 70/1.

¹³ *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

4. *Calls upon* States to ensure meaningful engagement with civil society, including non-governmental organizations and women's and community-based organizations, youth-led and girl-led organizations, and all other stakeholders such as volunteers and national human rights institutions where they exist, and women peacebuilders in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict in protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls during the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;

5. *Calls upon* Member States and other relevant stakeholders to identify and seize opportunities to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment as well as their participation in and access to the labour market, including through innovative ways of working that enable an equal sharing of care and family responsibilities between women and men;

6. *Also calls upon* Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take steps to bridge the digital divide, including the gender digital divide, as part of the efforts to ensure the empowerment of all women and girls, including their participation in recovery and enabling women to work remotely and girls to continue their education during the pandemic;

7. *Urges* Member States to prevent, respond to and eliminate violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence, and including in digital contexts, harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations, and trafficking in persons by designating protection and health-care services as essential services for all women and girls, especially those who are most vulnerable to violence and stigma, inter alia, by increasing emergency helplines, shelters and awareness-raising campaigns and by mobilizing all relevant stakeholders, and to address gender stereotypes and negative social norms;

8. *Calls upon* States to take all measures necessary to ensure the right of women and girls to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences, and to develop sustainable health systems and social services, with a view to ensuring universal access to such systems and services without discrimination;

9. *Emphasizes* the importance of the right of everyone to education and the continuation of learning, including girls, acknowledging that during the pandemic adolescent girls are at particular risk of dropping out and not returning to school even after the pandemic is over, thereby increasing their vulnerability to poverty, child, early and forced marriage and early pregnancy, calls upon Member States to ensure that girls are protected and supported in returning to school once it is deemed safe to do so, and in this regard calls upon Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take the appropriate measures in order to ensure the availability of learning materials and remote learning platforms during the pandemic, and to bridge the digital divide in order to provide distance learning opportunities, inter alia, Internet, television and radio teaching alternatives, especially in developing countries;

10. *Reaffirms* the need to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian and medical personnel responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their means of transport, supplies and equipment, and to support, facilitate and enable transportation and logistical supply lines, in order to allow such personnel to efficiently and safely perform their task of assisting affected civilian populations, especially women and girls, and in this regard emphasizes the need for humanitarian assistance to be gender-responsive, also reaffirms the need to take the measures

necessary to respect and protect such personnel, hospitals and other medical facilities, as well as their means of transportation, supplies and equipment, and recalls its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations and all subsequent General Assembly resolutions on the subject, including its resolution 74/118 of 16 December 2019;

11. *Also reaffirms* the importance of strengthening the protection of women and girls in armed conflict and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all decision-making levels and at all stages of peace processes and mediation efforts, including in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, recognizes their leadership therein and the need for their enhanced representation in peacekeeping, also recognizes that COVID-19 might slow down progress in this regard, and calls upon Member States to reinforce efforts in this area;

12. *Calls upon* Member States to take steps towards collecting and ensuring the availability of high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and other characteristics relevant in national contexts in scientific research on COVID-19, and in the analysis on the global public health impact as well as the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to address the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation and support the provision of clear, objective and science-based data and information on COVID-19;

13. *Calls upon* the United Nations to remain seized of this matter and to mainstream the gender perspective in the COVID-19 response and recovery, inter alia, through the inclusion of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and other United Nations entities, funds, programmes and agencies in relevant actions at Headquarters and in the field, including humanitarian assistance, under the leadership of the Secretary-General;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to follow up this matter within existing reporting, as appropriate, and within existing resources.
