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Statement submitted by Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, a non-governmental organization 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem supports the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman, the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, and fully support the efforts of UN-Women, focusing on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are at constant risk in many parts of the world. As an organization, we identify seven key areas that threaten the livelihood, equality, and empowerment of women and girls. They are:

- (1) Ownership rights of land;
- (2) Land price increases;
- (3) Energy cost increases;
- (4) Food price increases;
- (5) Unavailability of clean water;
- (6) Access to support services; and
- (7) Religious intolerance.

These threats to women and girls can be reduced by forward-looking and equitable governments. The theme for the 61st Commission on the Status of Women — “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” — is central to improving all seven identified areas. As women take a more active role in the workforce, threats to both women and society as-a whole will be reduced. Therefore, we call on all governments, along with the support of the private sector and civil society actors worldwide, to recognize, appreciate, and welcome the diverse skills of women and girls. In doing so, we, Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, believe that all societies can foster, and will benefit from, a culture of meritocracy. In light of both a fast aging population in all regions of the world — where older women and especially widows are often faced with tragic circumstances, rejected by society and without resources — and a rapidly changing economy — where all people, but particularly women and girls, are facing greater uncertainty — we firmly believe that, in this moment in history, we face extreme vulnerability, but also, immense opportunity. The time is now to empower women in the workforce in order to help ensure a strong and diverse 21st Century economy. As the world’s population grows past 7 billion, the stress on three fundamental requirements of life — water, food, and energy — continues to threaten our collective stability. Therefore, we all must ensure that — where some wrongly and unjustly call — the “less favored of Humankind” (in reference to women) can have easy and equal access to this basic requirements of life. Therefore, in following with this year’s theme, we wholeheartedly believe that support of women’s economic empowerment will ensure easier and more equal access to these requirements and furthermore, repudiate all those who would dare to refer to women as the “less favored of Humankind.” As an organization, we have, and will always, refer to, and accept, women as equals without reservation or caveat. Economic empowerment of women, coupled with the political right to earn a decent standard of living, will help women, of all ages to: buy, own, or inherit land. In turn, such a course of action

ensures a pathway to self-sustainability. For example, growing one's own food supply, or at least some of it, is just one way out of hunger and dependence; coupled with economic empowerment, this strategy will allow entire communities of women to support each other and break out of any dependence on others. For this reason alone, it is vital that governments allow easy, equitable, and safe access to sufficient clean and safe water supplies for consumption and sanitation, along with access to low-priced healthy food sources and affordable energy — traditional and renewable — to women. Sadly, and unjustly, these basic requirements for life are often denied to women because of their gender, economic restrictions, or education level. We call upon the United Nations, its constituent bodies, and all member states to work with all actors of civil society in a spirit of peace and cooperation, with respect and appreciation to the different cultures of the world, to develop and implement policies to eradicate hunger and thirst, with women's economic empowerment as a main driver to solving this worldwide problem. Similarly, the private sector, throughout the world, is well positioned to promote and support this effort. And with the addition of the work and advocacy of civil society, this is a problem we can collectively solve. Much like access to work opportunities, access to these identified resources must be made available, without sex-based limitation or discrimination, to all. This is very noble endeavour and we, as a non-governmental organization, welcome the opportunity to support these efforts. The Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Women's Rights are inseparably linked. By supporting women's economic empowerment, we can take the necessary steps required to assure availability of these fundamental resources, creating a sustainable, safe, and secure society for all.
