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**Commission on the Status of Women****Sixty-first session**

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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 HelpAge International, Mothers Union, National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, National Board of Catholic Women, Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform, United Kingdom Association for the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Wales Assembly of Women, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Widows Rights International and Zonta, 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 National Alliance of Women's Organisations United Kingdom is an umbrella organisation working for the advancement of women and girls and the realisation of their full human rights. It seeks to link the global and local providing the voice of our members in international fora and keeping them informed on current global endeavours. It seeks full implementation of international legal instruments for women and girls.

Work provides women with the opportunity to develop their capacities to create and develop intellect, to contribute to the advancement of society, to influence positive change as well as to provide and care for others. It is not merely an economic transaction.

Globally the work place, wherever that is sited, does not provide even viable subsistence for the majority of women, nor does it contribute to individual or community well-being. There is a crisis in the current economic system with large segments of the population — women and girls key amongst them — exploited and marginalised. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals provides the world with a remarkable opportunity to create new economic thinking and relationships that develop cooperation and reciprocity that leave no one behind.

The current flows of goods, services, capital and labour benefit a few at the expense of many. It has led to the mass destruction of the environment; the exploitation of vulnerable sectors of society: the impoverishment, disruption and dislocation of families and communities; and the disappearance of diversified and ecologically sustainable agriculture. As it is often women who are primarily engaged in this work, they are disproportionately affected by these trends. Women and girls have been structurally marginalized by the current system and entrenched patterns of discrimination, unsustainable development practices, climate change, and violence against women have increased the burden they bear. The economic empowerment of women cannot be achieved simply by increasing the strength of current processes and systems. A fundamental re-orientation of the global economic system is required.

Whilst the economic empowerment of women and girls is essential for ensuring that they have options and the ability to make and implement decisions about their lives and those of their families, questions need to be asked about how to implement the 2030 Agenda to ensure that recognition of the unacknowledged and unremunerated work of feeding, nurturing and caring for others refines our understanding of economic realities at the same time as ensuring that women participate fully in all arenas of work. Our vision has to go beyond making space for women in the current work context, one that is characterised by inequality and violence. We need to ensure that diverse economic arrangements are enabled to develop.

There is a need to define work more carefully. Whilst some suggest that any activity that receives remuneration of some sort can be defined as work, increasingly humanity is realizing that the term "work" must include within its definition a situation of equal treatment, without degradation or unhealthy work places. National Alliance of Women's Organizations considers that women's

empowerment, advancement and equality is undermined by the system of oppression and violence that is prostitution. National Alliance of Women's Organizations opposes the description of the sex trade as 'work like any other' and we call for renewed efforts to end poverty and particularly women's poverty as part of a holistic approach to ending the harms caused by the sex trade.

We need to recognize that the empowerment of women and girls, especially in the changing world of work, requires changes in the structures of society and thus in our thinking. Although women and girls are currently marginalized by the current economic systems, they offer the greatest potential to eradicate poverty and achieve prosperity for all.

Women and girls need equal access to all types of education and knowledge including technology. Thereafter capacity needs to be built to enable them to become active agents of their own learning, and thus the force of an ongoing effort to apply their newly gained knowledge to improve their own conditions and to contribute to the betterment of their communities.

We call on States Parties and the United Nations System to take steps to ensure that political will is refreshed and institutions and public bodies working for the advancement of women and girls use mainstreaming and positive action measures. We ask that robust questions are asked of all national, multinational and global institutions including:

- what actions are being taken to ensure women throughout their life course are encouraged to participate in all types and at all levels of work;
- what analysis is in place to ensure robust and comprehensive gender impact analysis;
- how can they ensure national economic, investment and growth strategies are developed and delivered to promote women's equality and rights;
- how are they ensuring investment and micro-financing is targeted to women;
- what is being done to ensure women and girls have increased access to digital and other technologies including green technologies;
- What is being done to ensure disaggregated statistics enable robust analysis of the importance of female headed households, especially widows.

National Alliance of Women's Organizations supports and encourages the work of the High Level Panel for Women's Economic Empowerment in securing change across governments for women's rights and equality.

NAWO members with ECOSOC Status

Widows Rights International

Zonta

Plan International UK

Wales Assembly of Women

Mothers Union

Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland

Business and Professional Women

United Kingdom Association for the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform