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Statement submitted by Canadian Federation of University Women, 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

The Canadian Federation of University Women joins concerned voices regarding accountability for global goals to end poverty, achieve gender equality and ensure decent work as part of the sustainable development agenda.

Having not achieved the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Member States are expected to set new targets for 2030 — essentially pushing the original targets by 15 years. Canadian Federation of University Women is concerned that member states are not being held accountable for achieving these targets, and we are concerned that because of this they will be postponed in perpetuity. As an organization dedicated to women's empowerment, we are determined to see countries take steps to improve the status of women and be held accountable for their promises.

This year's theme is Women's Economic Empowerment and the Changing World of Work. Today, women continue to be disadvantaged in the world of work. Women are more likely to work part-time, irregular and precarious jobs. They also do the majority of unpaid household and unpaid work. $\frac{3}{4}$ hours of unpaid work are done by women, while $\frac{2}{3}$ hours of paid work are done by men. Worldwide, women earn an average of 24% less than their male counterparts. Women hold $\frac{1}{5}$ leadership positions, and almost $\frac{1}{3}$ businesses have no women at all in senior management positions. Canada ranks in the bottom in terms of the pay gap between men and women, with women earning \$0.72 for every dollar earned by men. Support for child care and parental leave is well below the global average. Canadian women perform nearly twice as many hours of unpaid work each day as men — a ratio which has barely budged in the past 20 years.

Education remains a key element of the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable development is only possible through women's access to education. When women have access to education, they develop their skills in political and economic engagement, and have greater capacity to affect change in their environments. It is well known that when women have access to education, it has positive impacts not only for the individual, but for their families and communities. Women's education and empowerment have positive implications for climate change, poverty, hunger, violence against women and gender equality.

It is also documented that education alone is not enough to ensure "Women's Economic Empowerment". Mentorship is a key factor in supporting women in positions of power and ensuring women do not drop out of situations that would otherwise be unbearable without support. United Nations Member States should include mentorship as a fundamental pillar of education and bringing more women into positions of power.

Women's empowerment is derailed when women and girls are subjected to violence. In Canada, Indigenous women and girls experience disproportionate levels of violence. We are pleased to report that Canada is pursuing a National Inquiry into the murders and disappearances of hundreds of Indigenous, Metis and Inuit women and girls. The culture which accepts crime against one group of people is unacceptable and ignominious. Canadian Federation of University Women will be monitoring the Inquiry and subsequent outcomes closely.

General Recommendation No.19 (11th session, 1992) made by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women states that all

people have the “right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. At present, the Criminal Code of Canada does not include torture by non-state actors as a specific and distinct criminal offence, nor does Canada recognize that non-state actor torture is a form of violence against women. Women are disproportionately affected by this type of violence, and yet the crimes committed against them are not adequately recognized. Without the recognition of non-state torture in our Criminal Code, victims cannot receive justice, support or rehabilitation; the Canadian public remains unaware of the extent and gravity of these crimes; sufficient data cannot be collected on the subject, and law enforcement cannot prevent these crimes from happening. Bill C-242 to criminalize non-state actor torture is currently being considered by the Canadian government.

Violence against women on post-secondary campuses is a significant problem that has not been adequately addressed in Canada and around the world. This violence is enabled by factors such as rape culture, peer pressure, misunderstanding or disregard of consent, and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Violence against women on campus is further perpetuated by an absence of disciplinary action. Many university and college campuses are not equipped to deal with reports of violence. There is a lack of institutional support, unclear disciplinary procedures, and non-existent or inaccessible support services. United Nations Member States must address the violence faced by women as they pursue education at any level, including post-secondary.

Worldwide women have made gains in political representation. In the last election in Canada, however, despite the appointment of a gender-equal Cabinet, women only gained 1% of seats in Parliament, reaching 26%. In addition to the social and cultural barriers to women running for elected office, a major issue is our electoral system. Canada employs a winner-take-all electoral system. This system, First-Past-the-Post, wastes votes, over-represents large parties and results in lower voter satisfaction. When one compares the three remaining major Western democracies using First-Past-the-Post systems with major Western democracies using various forms of Proportional Representation, the advantage for female representation is clear. In Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, which all use First-Past-the-Post, representation for women does not break 30%. In states using Proportional Representation, women’s representation is often near or surpasses 40%. Simple democracy is not enough to ensure representation of women. Women and minorities around the world are better represented through systems of Proportional Representation than majoritarian systems.

Canadian Federation of University Women is a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with over 100 Canadian Federation of University Women Clubs, located in every province across Canada. Since its founding in 1919, Canadian Federation of University Women has been working to improve the status of women, and to promote human rights, public education, social justice, and peace. It holds special consultative status with the United Nations and belongs to the Education Committee of the Canadian Sub-Commission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Canadian Federation of University Women is the largest affiliate of Graduate Women International, which represents women worldwide.