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the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000:
gender equality, development and peace for the
twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Asociación Civil Hecho por Nosotros, 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

Introduction

Hecho por Nosotros welcomes the 62nd session of Commission on the Status of Women priority theme “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls”, and urges the Commission to expand on advancing sustainable textile industry, that provides a platform to address various sustainable development themes, especially amongst women and girls in rural areas.

The garment industry is, and has historically been, one of the most female-dominated industries in the world, with the estimation of 85% of the workforce of the industry being women. For all these women working in this industry, development is closely linked to their conditions at work. It’s about gaining a decent pay, working under dignified conditions and having basic work security. It’s about moving out of poverty, being able to provide children with education, and to become more independent and grow as an individual. It’s about dignity and ability to support themselves and the family, through economic empowerment. Also, women play important roles in promoting and protecting the food intake and nutritional status of their family members through the food they produce and process, and the care- and health-promoting behaviours they practice: increases in women’s income is improving the nutritional situation of families, particularly children. To advance these issues, we call for inclusive policies and enhancing economic opportunities for women, especially in rural areas.

Inclusive Policies for Rural Communities

Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also crucial to accelerating sustainable development, and should be included in policies for rural communities. It has been proven time and again, that empowering women and girls has a multiplier effect, and helps drive up economic growth and development across the world.

Textile sector is an important economic and employment driving force in many rural areas low-income countries given that it is one of the first stage manufacturing sectors. It employs millions of people formally, and up to 40% informally. An estimated 85% of all garment workers globally are women; employment and wage dividend out of the garment sector can be significant to enhance women’s economic empowerment and addressing gender inequality. If the right framework conditions and a supportive, inclusive policy environment are in place, the industry holds great positive development of women empowerment and gender equality, especially for women in rural areas.

Gender equality is smart economy, and contributing to sustainable development in three ways: First, removing barriers that prevent women from having the same access as men to education, economic opportunities, and productive inputs can generate broad productivity gains, increase in economic activities and tackling poverty by generating economic opportunities for women in rural areas. Second, improving women’s absolute and relative status feeds many other development outcomes, including those for their children; gender plays a crucial role when tackling hunger. Increase in women’s income will change spending in a way that benefit the family in higher food expenditure. Especially in rural communities, where economic situation or agricultural conditions are not providing adequate nor versatile nutrition, changes in income level remains crucial for the nutrition of a family. Third, levelling the playing field — where women and men have equal chances to become socially and politically active, make decisions,

and shape policies — is likely to lead over time to more representative, and more inclusive, institutions and policy choices and thus to a better development path.

In Latin America, where many of the families living in rural are involved in natural fibres production, inclusive programs that benefit the farmers and producers of these rural areas should be at the core of development policies.

Enhancing economic opportunities

To reach positive socio-economic change for women in rural areas, enhancing economic opportunities remains crucial. Enhanced participation in economic activities increase empowerment, bringing opportunities to participate decision-making of communities.

The benefits of enhanced economic opportunities are many folded. According to a study examining cases in Bangladesh when a garment factory locates near poor workers, women increased their educational attainment, while delaying marriage and childbirth. Girls near textile factories stayed in school 1.5 years longer than boys within the same families. This means the industry helps improve gender equality in education, and also provides an important plausibility test: Since most workers in the industry are women, it makes sense that their behaviour would change more (Heath & Mushfiq Mobarak 2015.).

We call the Member States of the Commission to develop programs to help textile workers, artisans, from rural areas to reach national and international markets, valuing traditional textile culture, training programmes to develop these women's skills even further. Only by working together, seeing the interrelations between sustainable development goals, we can truly advance Agenda 2030 and sustainable development.
