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Statement submitted by Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance, 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

Expanding the social and legal protection to include rural women and women agricultural workers in Egypt

Women and girls in rural areas suffer from continuous marginalization on different levels, whether social, political, educational, medical, and legal levels. However, women and girls working in agriculture suffer from different and deeper level of marginalization and exclusion. Women agricultural workers in many countries are deprived from the legal and social protection umbrella. In Egypt, there are not any laws that protect women in agriculture. Despite the dangers and challenges those women face, the Egyptian labour law clearly states that women in agriculture are exempted from the applications of this law, leaving them totally unprotected.

Although the Egyptian labour law grants all women workers several privileges and rights, such as the maternity leave, child care leave, the right to have a nursery in the workspace if there are more than 100 women working in this place, and many other rights, this does not extend to domestic workers and women working in agriculture without any explanation.

For thousands of years, women have been working alongside with men in agriculture and face the same challenges as their male colleagues in farms and agricultural jobs, yet women solely suffer from the absence of legal and medical social even though their male colleagues enjoy this protection. Despite the effect of agriculture in rural women's life, they have been constantly neglected in the official legal texts and statistics, which add to the percentage of women's efforts in the unofficial economy without any recognition. Women in agriculture also face discrimination in wages as they get paid much lesser than their male colleagues and the income of the work is not equally distributed between men and women. Furthermore, the legal protection is not only absent when women are still in work, but it is also absent when women gets older as they are not entitled to farmer's pension as the male farmers.

Egypt, among many other countries, has ratified the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women which guarantees in its articles and provisions the equality between men and women in the work field, equal legal protection of women and men in work without discrimination, and providing decent wages and salaries without discrimination among many other obligations. Moreover, despite that the National strategy for empowerment of women 2030 highlighted the crisis women in agriculture face regarding the legal and social protection; it only indicated the state's willingness to enhance the economic situation for women in agriculture without referring to the legal situation. Additionally, the Egyptian constitution in articles 9 and 11 affirm equality and equality opportunity, article 17 focuses on the social protection and empowerment of farmers and agricultural workers, and in article 29 the state is committed to developing the rural areas and enhance the quality of life of people in the rural areas.

Therefore, we, as Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, call the state to hold on their constitutional and international commitments in the constitution and ratified international conventions, guarantee better access to legal, social and medical protection to women in agriculture, guarantee the access to different services in order to enhance rural women's quality of life, and ensure that women farmers are entitled to pension as male farmers.

In conclusion, it is about time that women and girls in rural areas and working in agriculture obtain their legal rights and enjoy the state's protection. In order to develop and improve the world, all women have to be included in this process.
