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Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, 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

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without the full and equal participation of women in the labour force and full support for women's reproductive labours in their families and communities. To ensure the economic empowerment of women and reach the Sustainable Development Goals, governments must address the unfulfilled promises of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. Sociologists for Women in Society urges Member States to take the following actions:

Promote and Protect the Rights of Refugee and Migrant Workers

When families are forced by war or poverty to leave their homes, they become more vulnerable and subject to racism and discrimination. Women migrants often navigate threats of sexual abuse or violence. Yet refugees and migrants still retain valuable work skills and experience to help them adapt to their new situation. Child refugees and migrants need education to prepare for the future workplace. We call on Member States to take the following measures:

- Provide refugee and migrant women and girls with access to vocational/professional training programs, including language training (Beijing Platform for Action 147.I);
- Facilitate employment by migrant and refugee women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials (58.k);
- Protect refugee and migrant women and girls from forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking (Sustainable Development Goals 8.7);
- Ensure that young refugee and migrant girls of all ages receive schooling to prepare them for the workplace.

Promote and Protect the Rights of Pregnant Workers

To ensure full participation of women in the labour force, special consideration of women's reproductive role is required. Women make a unique contribution to the future by giving birth to the new generation, and their distinctive needs must be provided for to mobilize their full working capabilities. Member States should take the following measures:

- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to prohibit denial of employment or dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, breast-feeding, or contraceptive use (Beijing Platform for Action 165.c);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to require maternity leave with pay and without loss of employment, seniority, or social allowances (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women 11.2b);
- Promote the facilitation of breast-feeding for working mothers (Beijing Platform for Action 179.c) such as offering lactation rooms, support for women pumping breast milk, and healthy milk storage facilities;
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to prohibit forced contraception.

Promote and Protect Labour Rights of Female Workers

Women have a right to equal pay for their labour and to safe, secure working environments. When workers organize for better pay and working conditions, they deserve support and protection for their efforts. Member States should take the following measures:

- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value (165.a);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation against discrimination based on sex or age in the labour market, with special protections for older women workers (165.b);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation ensuring the right to organize (165.r) and recognize collective bargaining as a right (178.h);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation protecting working children, in particular street children, through the provision of appropriate health, education, and other social services (178.m);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to ensure labour rights in export processing zones and other work spaces subject to multiple legal systems;
- Enact, monitor and enforce legislation to protect the rights of unions and workers in vulnerable populations such as domestic workers;
- Protect sex workers against violence, offer training for alternative work, and take steps to reduce demand following the Swedish model of criminalizing the purchase but not the selling of sexual services.

Assure Social Security for Workers

Whether they work in the formal or informal workplace or in the home, female workers deserve social protection policies and social security on an equal basis with men. To achieve social security equity for women, Member States should take the following measures:

- Eliminate bias against women in inheritance tax and social security systems (165.f);
- Ensure that all corporations, including transnational corporations, comply with national laws and codes and social security regulations (165.l);
- Recognize unpaid care and domestic labour as bona fide work and allocate equitable pension and other social protection credits.

Improve working conditions for working parents and caregivers

To allow female workers to participate fully in the labour force, comprehensive childcare arrangements must be available and accessible. When girls are pressed into providing childcare for their families, they miss school and interrupt their education, preventing their full preparation for work and limiting their psychological and social development. Member States should take the following measures:

- Provide on-site child care and flexible working arrangements (180.b);
- Promote the equal sharing of family and household responsibilities by women and men (179.c);
- Enact, monitor, and enforce legislation to allow opportunities for men to take job-protected parental leave (179.c);
- Incentivize male parental leave through measures such as the Swedish model where male parental leave increases the parental leave allowance per child.

Promote and Protect the Rights of Rural workers

In the rural setting, female workers need secure access to resources in order to farm successfully and engage in other rural enterprises. Member States should take the following measures:

- Ensure that women have equal rights to economic resources including ownership and control over land, credit and savings services, and inheritance (165.e);
- Enforce land and inheritance rights for vulnerable workers such as widows and female heads of household;
- Ensure that rural women, especially young widows with small children, have access to child care services so that rural daughters do not sacrifice their education;
- Promote and regulate secure community banking so that female workers have access to credit and deposit services.

Address sexual harassment, violence against women, and discrimination in development planning

Women's wellbeing and human rights should be factored into development planning so that women are not segregated into low-wage or undignified occupations. Member States should take the following measures:

- Include women as full and equal participants in the formulation of policies (165.d), especially rural women;
- Eliminate occupational sex-segregation by promoting the equal participation of women in highly skilled, technology, science, math, and jobs traditionally dominated by men while encouraging men to seek employment in the social sector, care work, and other jobs traditionally dominated by women (178.g);
- Ensure access to and develop special programs to enable women with disabilities to obtain and retain employment (178.j);
- Ensure that tourism, hotel, and restaurant planning does not serve as a cover for the promotion of sex tourism;
- Promote women to leadership positions and encourage a critical mass of 30% or more women's leadership in development projects, government offices, and corporate boards.

Increase accountability for gender equality commitments at the United Nations through better data collection

The extent of women's contribution to the workforce and community cannot be fully appreciated without comprehensive data. The best development planning relies on evidence-based analysis that includes both quantitative statistical and qualitative descriptive data. Member States should take the following measures:

- Document the type, extent, and distribution of unremunerated work, particularly work in caring for dependents and unremunerated work done for family farms and businesses (165.g), using both quantitative and qualitative methods;
- Improve data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including their participation in the informal sector (206.e).

Achieve gender parity in the United Nations

To realize the economic empowerment of women, the United Nations system should lead by example, with particular attention to the following measures:

- Commit to establishing gender parity among the Secretary General's team and across the Secretariat, including in the Senior Management Group, the Policy Committee, and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination;
- Commit to developing a plan and timeline for achieving gender parity in senior appointments across the entire United Nations, including concrete measures to improve the pipeline of qualified female candidates such as:
 - Providing pathways for upward mobility for female staff, such as short-term assignments in hardship zones to enable mobility into leadership positions;
 - Enabling easier transitions between different United Nations grade positions.
 - Developing a mentorship program for female staff.