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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 Human Rights Advocates Inc., 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

I. Introduction

Human Rights Advocates Inc. applauds the Commission on the Status of Women's efforts in addressing persistent gender economic inequalities, especially those related to the gender wage gap, which contribute to the feminization of poverty, as per the sixty first session of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The feminization of poverty is considered as the disparate impact that poverty has on women where pay disparity, gender stereotypes, and unequal burden of family responsibilities on women increase the problem. (Understanding the feminization of poverty, *The Forum on Women, Religion, Violence, and Power*, 2017). Significant strides have been achieved to place women and men on a more equal status. Human Rights Advocates Inc., acknowledges this progress made towards achieving wage parity between men and women and therefore lessening the gap. At the current rate the World Economic Forum predicts it will take approximately 202 years to achieve gender parity. The Commission on the Status of Women should urge the international community to adopt a uniform method of calculating the gender wage gap and to renew efforts to achieve wage equality between men and women. One of the major problems with accurately calculating the gender wage gap is that inconsistent variables are utilized to measure the gap, which means that the exact magnitude and severity of the gap is unknown. Despite the inconsistency of the variables used, there is an undeniable gap in remuneration between males and females (The gender pay gap: is the problem getting worse? *Silicon Republic*, 2019.)

The statistics mentioned below the subheading, "examples of wage inequality across the globe" are taken from the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report of 2018 unless stated otherwise. The information was taken from each country report and the category used was "wage equality for similar work survey" for this statement.

II. Gender wage gap

Women should be remunerated equally for equal work. The United Nations has addressed the matter of inequality of wage between men and women for over 70 years starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights signed in 1948. Article 23 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights addresses wage issues by promoting equal pay for everyone. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women affirms the principle of equal remuneration in Article 11 (1)(d) by asserting women have the right to equal remuneration and to equal treatment in the workplace.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action addresses the wage gap issue in the "women and the economy" category in the strategic objective F.5(k), stating countries should increase efforts and work towards implementing the, "principle of equal remuneration for equal pay", between men and women by calling for national legislation and creation of international standards and methods for adjudication of violations. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action also recognizes obstacles to the achievement of equal pay such as a lack of gender perspective in the development of policy, the disproportionate number of women that work in the informal economy and low-income jobs. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognizes issues such as sex discrimination in hiring and promoting, discrimination against pregnant women and pregnancy related conditions, and workplace sexual harassment that need to be studied along with the pay gap due to their effects on the gap. However, these factors are not included when measuring the gap.

III. Examples of wage inequality across the world

According to the World Economic Forum, the world wage equality is 65.4 per cent. Iceland is the country with the highest wage parity and Mauritania is the country with the lowest (Global gender gap report: wage equality for similar work, *World Economic Forum*, 2018). The International Labor Organization reports that on average women are paid 20 per cent less than men in similar jobs and experience. However, when considering monthly wages, the disparity is 22 per cent, whereas the disparity for hourly wages is 16 per cent.

(a) Latin America and the Caribbean

Inconsistent results published when measuring the gap is highlighted in this region, where there are different statistics as to how big the gap is but shows there is an undeniable gap. The average gender gap in Latin America and the Caribbean is 40 per cent with Nicaragua having the highest gender wage equality at 80 per cent and Mexico and Argentina tied at the lowest at 50 per cent (Gender pay gap index, *Statista*, 2018). Nicaragua is one of the fastest improving countries because since 2006 it has continuously worked towards improving the gender gap. However, World Economic Forum reports the region's wage gap is 45 per cent; Venezuela having the highest parity at 71 per cent and El Salvador having the lowest at 46.6 per cent.

The main area of concern in the region is the lack of enforcement of legislation. Some countries lack methods of adjudicating wage inequality and some do not demand mandatory reporting from companies on issues and adherence with wage parity legislation (Spotlight on the gender pay gap in Latin America, *Baker & Mackenzie*, 2018).

(b) North America

The average wage gap for North America is 25.7 per cent, according to the World Economic Forum 2018 Global Gender Gap Report.

Despite the narrowing of the wage gap, during the last 15 years progress towards closing the gap has stagnated. On average women in United States of America are being underpaid 15 per cent less than their male counterparts for equal work. (The narrowing, but persistent, gender gap in pay, *Pew Research Center*, 2019.) One of the major obstacles women face regarding wage parity in the United States of America, is a lack of a national parental leave policy. According to the Pew Research Center, there is a significant decrease in women's earnings when they undertake family caregiving responsibilities because they need to take time off, leading to interruptions in their career path, which impacts their earning potential.

(c) Europe

According to the World Economic Forum's 2018 Gender Gap Report, the average wage gap in Europe is 35.1 per cent; Iceland having the highest wage parity at 82 per cent and Hungary the lowest at 51.7 per cent.

The European Union in 2017 reported women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16 per cent below men. In 2017 Estonia had the highest gender wage gap at 25.6 per cent. The European Union acknowledged its biggest problem is stagnation of progress as the gap remained consistent for several years. The European Union needs to renew mobilization of legislation and enforcement to address the wage inequality issue. (Gender pay gap statistics, *Eurostat*, 2019.)

(d) Africa

According to the World Economic Forum report, Africa's wage gap is 35.3 per cent. The country with the highest wage parity is Guinea with 79.6 per cent and the country with the lowest is Mauritania with 41.9 per cent. Mauritania has the worst wage equality in the world.

(e) Asia and the Pacific

According to the World Economic Forum report the region has an average wage gap of 31.6 per cent. Singapore having the highest parity at 83.5 per cent and Korea the lowest at 53.2 per cent.

Although Singapore is ranked second on wage equality, Value Champion, a consumer website for India, Korea, and Singapore, reports the gender wage gap in 2018 has widened. The change is attributed to a larger number of men working in higher paying jobs and because in average women in Singapore work five hours less per week than men. The five hours difference is due to women spending more time in household chores and childcare than men. (Singapore's gender wage gap widened in 2018, Value Champion, 2019).

IV. Conclusion

The gender wage gap is an issue for every country in the world. The gap not only shows that women do not receive equal pay for equal work, but also that poverty itself has become systematically feminized. The gender wage gap is a complex matter that needs to be addressed. Human Rights Advocates Inc. recommends that the Commission on the Status of Women

- lists clear categories to accurately measure the wage gap
- asks governments to regularly report on the categories to obtain an idea of the magnitude of the wage gap
- urge for a renewal on legislation on gender wage parity for Member States considering that in some areas in the world if progress has been achieved, it is minimal, has stagnated, or the little progress achieved has regressed.