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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Interactive dialogue on building alliances for women’s full and effective participation in public life

Chair’s summary

1. On 17 March 2021, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on building alliances for women’s full and effective participation in public life.
2. The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Na Sang-Deok (Republic of Korea), chaired the dialogue and made an introductory statement. The Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Government, Emilia Sáiz, moderated the dialogue. Government officials from 16 Member States and nine invited speakers from diverse stakeholder groups participated in the dialogue. The Vice-Chair made concluding remarks.

Enhancing women’s participation in public life through building strategic alliances with multiple stakeholders

3. Participants recognized the importance of strengthening women’s networks and building alliances with grass-roots organizations to achieve equality in public life. Speakers highlighted the need to build those alliances from the bottom up and actively engage civil society in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They further acknowledged that representatives of women’s civil society organizations advocated for their communities, families and children. In addition, participants noted the importance of building alliances with men and boys and engaging them as agents of change and as strategic partners in the promotion of women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life.
4. Participants highlighted the important role of education and awareness-raising as vehicles for empowering women and enhancing their political participation. Speakers emphasized the role of the media in preventing the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and underlined how the media often downplayed women’s role in



leadership or focused on their private lives instead of their political impact. Participants called for the development and implementation of regulatory frameworks and strategies for print, broadcast and digital media to eliminate gender stereotypes and foster the positive portrayal of women and girls as leaders in public life.

5. Speakers shared examples of good practices, including legislation that promoted the full and effective participation of women in public life, and called for the accelerated implementation of laws and gender action plans.

Building alliances to leave no one behind

6. Participants acknowledged the importance of reaching the most vulnerable groups of women, including those subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Speakers noted that women's participation in decision-making reflected the priorities of and led to better outcomes for everyone, not just for women. They stressed the need to engage young women and girls who might face particular barriers to their empowerment. Participants highlighted the need to support and reach those groups of women and girls so as to enable them to attain leadership positions in public life.

7. Speakers provided examples of good practices for including the most vulnerable groups in decision-making positions and public life in general, such as repealing and reforming laws that discriminated against women and girls and reforming policies that imposed institutional barriers and prevented women from engaging in political parties and as candidates in elections.

8. Participants underscored the importance of implementing measures to increase the number of women in decision-making such as affirmative actions, quotas and temporary special measures to accelerate women's participation and their full and equal representation in public life.

Addressing violence against women and girls and the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on women and girls in order to promote women's participation in public life

9. Speakers recognized that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, was deepening pre-existing inequalities and posed challenges to achieving the full realization of the rights of women and girls. Participants expressed concern that women and girls were exposed to gender-based discrimination and violence owing to the lockdown, which limited their participation in public life.

10. Participants stressed the need to address violence against women and girls, which had increased significantly during the pandemic. Speakers highlighted the need for women and girls to live a life free of violence, recognized the need to strengthen the voice, agency and leadership of women and girls and called for the implementation of gender-responsive measures in responses to COVID-19.

11. Speakers highlighted that women were particularly affected by a lack of economic resources and by unemployment and that they constituted the majority of informal workers. Participants underscored the importance of closing the wage gap and redistributing the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work by promoting the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men within the household. They stressed the need to partner with women in all stages of the COVID-19 response and recovery plans.