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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”**

Statement submitted by Latter-day Saint Charities, 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

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights maintains that “[e]veryone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.” This simple idea is at the heart of the priority theme of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women, which calls for “the full and effective participation and decision-making of women in public life.” Sadly, there are many barriers to full participation in public life by women throughout the world, and the subsequent loss of public contributions by women is incalculable.

Many barriers to such participation stem from inadequate access to health care, clean water, and proper nutrition. Access to such basic, life-sustaining needs empowers women and girls (and all people) to move beyond an existence of mere subsistence and survival to one of full and robust participation in public life. Providing for these basic needs is therefore a critical part of enhancing the participation of women in public life everywhere.

As the humanitarian organization of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Latter-day Saint Charities provides outreach and aid programs that reflect a Christian understanding that all people are children of God, regardless of the belief system or tradition they follow. A 1995 proclamation issued by the Church’s First presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles underscores this view: “All human beings – male and female – are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”

In harmony with this worldview, Latter-day Saint Charities sponsors impartial, independent, and neutral humanitarian relief and development projects for women and their families without regard to race, religious affiliation, or nationality. Initiatives address health care for women and newborn infants, clean water and sanitation, refugee assistance, food and nutrition, disaster relief, and more. Since 1985, these initiatives have spanned 197 countries and totaled more than \$2.3 billion in aid. In 2019 alone, 3,221 projects were undertaken in 142 countries.

At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has deepened existent crises and created new ones, our best, most collaborative efforts are needed now more than ever before. In the midst of these challenging times, Latter-day Saint Charities affirms its commitment to providing relief that enables women and girls to thrive, which will in turn provide immeasurable strength to their families, communities, and nations. In connection with that commitment, we call on governments, communities, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based organizations to link arms in a united effort to protect and empower women and girls. Our united efforts in this critical issue will create a future of unparalleled peace, opportunity, and prosperity.