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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all

Statement submitted by UNANIMA International, 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.

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

UNANIMA International, together with our endorsers, welcomes the United Nation's decision to choose the theme "Socially Just Transition Towards Sustainable Development: The Role of Digital Technologies on Social Development and the Well-being of All" as the Priority Theme for the 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development. The issue of Homelessness proved to be and remains a pervasive international issue related to nearly all multilateral issues and focuses of the United Nations. An issue so often left behind within the global debate, the issue of Homelessness is finally being elevated and identified as the significant crosscutting and international issue that it is. Homelessness occurs in each country globally, with different manifestations and unique drivers. Prompted by the priority theme of the 58th Commission for Social Development and international advocates, advocacy on the issue has highlighted meaningful partnership between all stakeholders, namely Member States, the United Nations and civil society. With a common goal to work together to end Homelessness, we as a global community now must ensure that Homelessness is given salience and remains at the center of multilateral diplomacy until it is eradicated.

Family Homelessness, Displacement, and Trauma have proved to be among the most pervasive and highly gendered issues internationally. Highlighted through the United Nation's 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Secretary General's selection of climate as a priority theme, and the upcoming 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development, they remain issues that must be discussed and addressed globally. Homelessness affects families and individuals regardless of their social, economic, environmental, or geographic context. It is often considered embarrassing or a taboo subject, and governments tend to underestimate and minimize the phenomenon, and fail to address it. For these reasons Homelessness often reflects governance and leadership of a Nation State. As street homelessness represents ultimate vulnerability to Women and Children, many situations of "hidden homelessness" exist; these range from families remaining in unsafe housing, to women feeling forced into situations of abuse, to "doubling up" in insufficient space. Inherently linked to the issues of multidimensional poverty and wealth and income inequality, recognition of these intersections and addressing them is integral in achieving just transitions and sustainable development, including through technology. UNANIMA International calls for global action towards a paradigm shift in how we perceive the problems of Homelessness and Poverty. We call for recognition of the urgent need to shift away from the many abusive attitudes and beliefs that circulate around homelessness and all other issues that hinder just transitions, promoting instead a dialogue that views and treats these issues as what they are: Human and Civil Rights issues.

It can be said the United Nation was founded on the need for just transitions globally. The concept of a just transition has its origins in the labor movement, aiming to secure the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities. Achieving just transitions ensures social inclusion and requires multisectoral and multilateral approaches. Among other things, just transitions are based on social dialogue, inclusive participation, and a commitment to human rights. Examples of such transitions include the Paris Agreement and the Guidelines for a just Transition (2015) negotiated by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

While the topic of just transitions is relatively new there is consensus throughout the international policy community of their importance. What is imperative to note, however, is that approaches to ensuring socially just transitions have been at the center of grassroots movements and organizations for decades, labor movements being an example of this. Such movements required years of advocacy built by

grassroots movements, for whom just transitions have not been a pragmatic solution to policy issues but rather the impetus for social change in response to injustice.

Just transitions are a fundamental element of achieving social and environmental justice and long-term sustainable development for all. Social dialogue and the right to participation for all lies at the heart of these. When we speak about or act to promote just transitions, we must refer to all of humanity ensuring that each individual and family's dignity is valued. Many marginalized groups, including families (Women and Children/Girls) experiencing Homelessness, have been isolated from political processes. Agency must be given to all people, at all levels, irrespective of their economic, social, geographic or immigration status to participate and actively contribute to change. Furthermore, we must ensure peoples affected by the transition are equal stakeholders; this means they must be a central part of the planning, decision-making and implementation processes. It is only when this occurs that truly just transitions will occur, as with all evolution and change, the inclusion of local people will ensure an understanding of the local context. In short, an inclusive dialogue is needed to guarantee that the concerns and needs of affected communities are fully understood and addressed. We emphasize the principle "do not talk about us without us."

Socially Just Transitions are the responsibility of all. They require a multistakeholder, multisectoral and multilateral approach where singular and cross cutting issues such as Family Homelessness, Displacement and Trauma are addressed. Inter alia social protection systems and digital technologies provide potential pathways to preventing poverty and social exclusion for those affected by these transitions. Adequate and universal social protection as set out in ILO Convention 102 on Minimum Standards of Social Security and Recommendations 202 on Social Protection Floors, as well as digital technologies are capable of delivering transformative impact in relation to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This was highlighted by Secretary General, Antonio Gutteres, at the closing of the 2018 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development where he stated: "Technology has great potential to help deliver the SDGs, but it can also be at the root of exclusion and inequality. We need to harness the benefits of advanced technologies for all."

As noted by Gutteres, there are a vast array of ways in which information technology can facilitate social inclusion and just transitions for many people in our society. Appropriate and equitable access to these technologies has the potential to significantly impact and ensure access to the care, goods and services individuals and families need to thrive. Conversely lack of access has the potential to further exacerbate economic, social, political, and educational inequalities and opportunities, in turn hindering just transitions and sustainable development.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have witnessed such outcomes to the ample degree. Homeless families being excluded from systems that are meant to support them, children unable to access educational institutions during lockdown, and limited access to health and well-being services, to name a few, have exacerbated inequalities at the domestic and international level for peoples experiencing homelessness and many others in vulnerable situations. Furthermore, Homeless families, especially Women and Children/Girls have felt the burden of increased social exclusion, stigmatization and limited access to services that ensure their basic human rights can be obtained.

Irrespective of the current crisis we call for the targeted policies and interventions which ensure individuals and families who fall into such categories receive and have access to digital technologies, social protection and services which

will empower them to achieve their human rights and fully participate in just transitions into the future.

This Statement is endorsed by the following Non-Government Organizations at the United Nations with ECOSOC Status: Appui Solidaire pour le Renforcement de l'Aide au Developpement; Casa Generalizia della Societa del Sacro Cuore; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; Congregations of St. Joseph; Congregation of the Mission; Daughters of Charity; Institute of Global Homelessness at DePaul University; International Presentation Association; Red Dot Foundation; Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Charity Federation; Sisters of Mercy of the America's; Society of the Sacred Heart; Soroptimist International; The International Association of Charities; VIVAT International;

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