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Statement submitted by Fédération Européenne des Femmes Actives en Famille, 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

Fédération Européenne des Femmes Actives en Famille is a non-denominational, non-profit European federation of parent and carer non-governmental organizations seeking recognition for the unpaid work.

This year's priority theme for the Commission on the Status of Women is women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

- Unpaid care and domestic work must be a top priority.
- Carers, both paid and unpaid must be represented and included in decision making and public life and their needs and interests must be taken into consideration.
- Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance and if we are to eliminate violence and reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with the children.

Unpaid care and domestic work

It has become obvious during the Covid-19 pandemic what is and will remain important and what cannot wait despite any kind of crisis – namely the care of others, the core of every society.

The pre-existing inequalities for women concerning unpaid care and domestic work has utterly increased during covid-19. Before the pandemic, women were already doing 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, three times more than men.

The monetary value of unpaid care work globally for women aged 15 and over is at least \$10.8 trillion annually, three times the size of the world's tech industry (Oxfam report – Time to Care; nr1 – 2020).

Unpaid caregiving work must be recognized based on the value it brings to society. Not only the financial value, but also the societal and cultural. Should it diminish by the governmental redistribution of it, relational capital is lost in the form of attachment between parent and child, transferral of cultural and ethical values between generations.

In many countries we redistribute the unpaid work and force separations between children and mothers just to make the care count monetarily.

If another woman cares for my child it is suddenly valued.

The question is, do we get the same outcome.

United Nation bodies and agencies have worked to highlight the issue on unpaid work and the target 5.4 in the Sustainable Development Goals:

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate, is a huge step in the right direction, making its importance visible to all, but the question is how the work can be valued when it's not counted.

In the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, Why addressing women's income and time poverty matters for sustainable development, [A/74/111](#), we

can read that, Unpaid care and domestic work are explicitly excluded from the System of National Accounts and are therefore traditionally overlooked in economic analyses.

And in the report Extreme poverty and human rights, [A/68/293](#) it is stated that, Domestic work and caring for people has remained largely invisible in economic calculations, statistics, policy and political discourse, and is commonly undervalued by society and policy makers, despite the fact that its monetary value is estimated at from 10 to over 50 per cent of GDP.

To make women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life possible during all of a life span, not only do we have to bring up the economic aspects, but also time poverty. After all hours spent on both paid and unpaid work with caring and domestic responsibilities, there is no time left. Neither for participation in decision making and in public life, nor time for rest and leisure.

Motherhood – Childhood

About eighty percent of all women become mothers.

During the reproductive years there must be special care and protection taken into consideration, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Art. 25.2, Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.

As the research about child development has reached new levels, we know more about the importance of the bonding/attachment with first and foremost the primary caregiver, often the mother during the first three years of life. This must be taken into consideration in all other decisions and new policies and time must be given for all to build and raise families, not only for women but also for men.

The lack of childhood, family life and motherhood and the reproductive years in the gender equality discussions is a blind spot and seem to be a sensitive issue to bring on the agenda. There is a time in a woman's life when her focus is, and should be, towards the child she is bearing, giving birth to, breastfeeding and nurturing during the first years, when bonding is crucial. This is a vulnerable time that needs protection and society needs to step up and acknowledge this period and give both parents enough time to dedicate some years for family building and bonding.

If we are to eliminate violence and reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with the children. How we raise our children, how much love, attachment and time they are given during the first years, lay the foundations for our future.

We can't be fully engaged in both public and personal life without taking time from one or the other. There is a cost and it's time to put priority on how we take care of our youngest children, how we raise them in order to eliminate violence and create peace in our homes and local communities.

Economic support and time must be given to build strong families, to raise children to become respectful and empathetic citizens.

Now is the time to make the empowerment of women and girls also include the important reproduction years of life and bring value to it.