



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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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 Global G.L.O.W., Grail, The, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Loreto Generalate, and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations 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.



## Statement

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loreto Generalate, Global G.L.O.W., The Grail, and VIVAT International welcome the 68th Commission on the Status of Women's focus on addressing poverty, strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. We know that poverty is a gendered issue with the most affected being women and girls. Our organizations collaborate with and support women, girls, and their communities in over 100 countries offering programs in education, mentoring, economic, political and social capacity building that allow them to self-advocate and claim their human rights. We are committed to the realization of gender equality and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all girls and women, throughout their lifetime.

According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report: Insight Report June 2023, the global gender gap score in 2023 for all 146 countries included in the analysis, stood at 68.4 per cent closed; up by 0.3 per cent percentage points from 2022. While progress is encouraging, the reality remains that at this rate, it will take 131 years to reach full parity and close the gender gap.

Sustained global investments in women's health and education have proven successful at helping to close the gap. The same report found that the health and survival gender gap closed by 96 per cent, and the educational attainment gap by 95.2 per cent. Further, the economic participation and opportunity gap closed by only 60.1 per cent, and the political empowerment gap closed by a mere 22.1 per cent. Increased investments in achieving gender equality in the areas of economic participation and political leadership are needed to improve progress in these areas.

Girls are affected by socioeconomic conditions that prevents the realization of gender equality. The United Nations Children's Fund 2022 Gender Equality Global Annual Results Report indicates that practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage impede gender equality efforts. UNICEF reports that to reach the Sustainable Development Goal target of ending child marriage by 2030, nearly 20 times faster progress is needed. Girls are twice as likely as boys not to be engaged in any form of employment, education or training and they face challenges in digital access and literacy. Worldwide, adolescent girls face restrictions in their agency concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights, and lack opportunities to exercise their right to free speech and participate in leadership.

Our networks are engaged in actions that support women and girls to achieve gender equality. We believe in a world where everyone shares equal standing and opportunity in all aspects of life. However, gender disparities in education, health, economic opportunity, participation, political engagement, and leadership remain.

Our European networks report that although there have been some advances in the education and economic participation of women, they still face obstacles in achieving wage equality with their male counterparts. Stereotyping still exists and assumptions that women will not pursue executive roles because of childcare and family responsibilities continue.

Lower salaries of women wage earners translate into lower pensions later in life. Furthermore, women do not earn pensionable income when engaged in unpaid caring roles within the home. This, in turn, can lead to an impoverished aging demographic of women with few social supports.

Consequently, not only do we need policies that support women's wage equality; we need a robust system of social support for women who lack the income and pension support needed for a dignified aging. Single mothers, pensioners, women in

caring roles, and women on the margins of society, including those who lack state status, need social protection that enables economic participation at all stages of life.

In states where political or financial systems are marked by corruption and promised funds for women are not realized at the ground level, the social system itself needs to be renewed. Our network in South Asia notes that local government officers can manipulate the funding designated for women and girls that when it finally reaches the people on the ground, only half or sometimes less than half of what was initially sanctioned by the national government is received. The increasing corruption and malpractices are crippling the developmental work at all levels and are significant obstacles to achieving gender equality.

With respect to political engagement, more states are introducing compulsory policies to improve gender parity. There are examples of governments who have legislated for equal representation or an increase in female representatives in parliaments and government bodies like Rwanda, Spain, Canada, Colombia, France, and Nepal. While these policies are an important step towards greater representation of women in national political leadership, investments are needed worldwide in initiatives and practices that engage girls in political leadership from an early age, in local or regional political spaces, within schools or communities. Girls who participate in political leadership early gain the confidence and expertise to pursue political leadership at higher levels later in life.

Recognizing the diversity of women and girls around the world, and the various conditions that contribute to gender equality in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and political engagement and leadership; we urge Member States to commit to:

#### Institutional Investment in Women and Girls:

- Implement gender-based analysis for policy and program development at all levels, including gender-specific funding for initiatives to reduce the gender gap.
- Ensure women have equal access to financial services, including banking, credit, and insurance, promoting financial independence and investment.
- Bolster, implement, and uphold legal protections for girls and women to exercise their rights.

#### Investment in Girls' and Women's Education:

- Increase funding for free quality education especially for girls, and scholarships and bursaries for women with limited financial means to re-enter the education system.
- Develop and enhance existing curriculum in schools on gender equality, emphasizing dignity and respect for women and girls in all their diversity, including supporting girls' agency and decision-making.
- Invest in public education campaigns that promote gender equality, emphasizing women's capacity in all spheres of society and addressing harmful gender stereotypes.
- Invest in gender-specific financial literacy programs for girls and women to empower them with the knowledge and skills for managing finances and investments.
- Implement initiatives to identify and address the root causes of girls dropping out of school, including lack of sanitary facilities, early and forced marriages, and societal expectations.

#### Investment in Girls' and Women's Health and Wellbeing:

- Increase investments in global efforts to eradicate harmful cultural practices affecting girls, especially female genital mutilation, forced and child marriage.
- Provide adequate sanitation facilities for women and girls, and accessible and affordable sanitary products.
- Invest in preventive healthcare measures, including regular screenings for diseases such as breast and cervical cancer, and awareness campaigns encouraging women to prioritize their health.
- Ensure access to quality free healthcare services.
- Invest in infrastructure, such as improved roads, health facilities, electricity, digital technology, and clean and safe public spaces for leisure.

Investment in Women's Reproductive Health and Rights:

- Ensure affordable and accessible healthcare services, including maternal and reproductive healthcare for all women.
- Implement comprehensive and age-appropriate sex education programs in schools to promote awareness and reproductive health.
- Provide accessible and affordable mental health services tailored to the specific needs of women and girls.

Invest in Women in the Workforce:

- Encourage women's participation in the workforce by providing access to affordable quality childcare, flexible hours, remote work options, and opportunities to bring children into the workplace.
- Implement policies and practices ensuring equal pay for equal work and ensure accountability mechanisms across public and private sectors.
- Legislate living wages for care industry workers.
- Reformulate pension plans and benefits to include hours women devote to unpaid care work within the home.
- Offer a specific number of paid period leaves per year to acknowledge the physical and emotional challenges women may face during menstruation.
- Respect girls' agency in determining and pursuing their own professional futures.

Gender Diversity in Leadership:

- Work to eliminate gender bias and stereotypes, including in the media, that discriminate against girls and women in leadership.
- Encourage companies to create a gender diverse environment consisting of gender diverse leadership teams and boards of directors.
- Provide girls with safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces and platforms for their freedom of expression.

Investment in Technology and Digital Inclusion:

- Offer digital literacy programs to bridge the digital gender gap, enabling women and girls to access and utilize technology effectively.
- Implement stringent cybersecurity measures to protect women and girls from online harassment and cyberbullying.