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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Statement submitted by Casa Generalizia della Societa' del Sacro Cuore, Congregation of the Mission, Congregations of St. Joseph, Fondazione Proclade Internazionale – Onlus, International Presentation Association, Loretto Community (Sisters of Loretto), Passionists International, Salesian Missions Inc., Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, and UNANIMA 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 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its outcomes affirmed that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a pre-condition for social justice. It aimed to remove all obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life by ensuring women a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace, and in all institutions operating in the wider national and international communities.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development further reinforced these principles through the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality. We are disheartened to report that, despite these rhetorical advances, our congregations continue to see girls and women suffering all around the world due to rampant patriarchy persistent in the social, economic, and cultural practices governing their everyday lives.

According to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women):

- It is estimated that an average of 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family every day.
- Women and girls comprise 71 per cent of trafficking victims, with nearly three out of four being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and with girls representing nearly three out of every four child trafficking victims.
- It is estimated that there are 650 million women and girls in the world today who were married before age 18.
- At least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital mutilation, according to data collected from only 30 countries.
- Approximately 15 million adolescent girls (15 to 19 years of age) worldwide have experienced forced sex (sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) at some point in their life. Of these 15 million girls, 9 million were victimized within the past year.
- Eighty-two per cent of women parliamentarians who participated in a study conducted by the Inter-parliamentary Union in 39 countries across five regions reported having experienced some form of psychological violence.
- Although availability of data on violence against women has increased significantly in recent years, nearly 90 United Nations Member States have not conducted a single survey addressing the issue since 1995.

The list above is only a small sampling of indications that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has not created a safe and equal world for women and girls.

Another area of consideration is reproductive freedom. While the goals for achieving women's equality are clearly stated, individual implementation by governments often obstruct reproductive freedom by advocating for and providing steroid hormones to the exclusion of other contraceptive methods. The widespread complaints of women who object to these drugs or devices or have experienced their harmful effects are routinely dismissed. Meanwhile, natural family planning users are recorded among those with unmet needs for "modern" methods. Advocating solely for contraceptive steroid use for adolescents and young women ignores the impact of

this method's side effects on their lives and their right to be informed of, and given access to, other methods.

However, the measures taken to address the issue of gender equality are a sign of hope:

- At least 144 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 154 have laws on sexual harassment.
- Recent mobilization of young girls in the leadership of climate crisis, as demonstrated by the captivating example of Greta Thunberg and Alexandria Villasenor, are indications that girls are empowering themselves to address the global issues that their leaders have failed to adequately address.
- There are men and boys getting involved in addressing patriarchy through programmes such as those offered by Gender Equality Reconciliation International and the ManKind Project in the United States of America, which train men and boys to see and grow beyond the domineering roles and goals that patriarchal societies define as masculine.

To move decisively toward the world envisioned by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we recommend that Member and Observer States:

- Recommit to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially its assertion that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights, a requirement for social justice, and a precondition for sustainable development.
- Enforce and strengthen laws on violence against women and safe reporting methods for victims to both prevent violence and ensure access to justice.
- Revisit the national social policies and invest in quality education and training programmes for boys, girls, and adults as needed to eliminate a gender-segregated labor market.
- Invest in gender equality and anti-discrimination education programmes aimed at increasing the number of enlightened men and boys who collaborate with girls and women to address patriarchy as a common threat for development and peace.
- Make greater use of the tool of economic empowerment of women and girls to promote gender equality by promoting equal pay for equal work and breaking gender stereotypes.
- Ensure economic justice by progressive taxation and preventing illicit financial flows to increase domestic revenues.
- Increase spending on social protection systems and affordable housing for all, particularly vulnerable girls and women.
- Systematically reduce environmental destruction, which disproportionately deprives women and girls of safety, education, and economic opportunity, by establishing environmental regulations that reflect the severity and immediacy of the climate crisis and establishing a redress mechanism to hold corporations accountable for environmental harm and its human impacts.
- Invest in the Global Climate Fund and national-level disaster risk reduction measures, including provisions for the remediation of losses and damages suffered in the context of environmental disaster, destruction, and climate change.

- Establish protocols for gender-responsive professional assessment of the protection needs of all refugees and migrants in all stages of migration and prioritization of response to protection needs ahead of status determination at any stage.

We, as faith-based organizations, believe that patriarchy is a threat to women and girls and to development and world peace. Because the development of a country depends on the empowerment of their women and girls, and because people of all sexes and gender identities are all born equal, religion and politics must not hinder women from exercising their human rights or free equal meaningful engagement in building just communities, nations, and global society. We therefore urge all States to recommit to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by acting on it in their respective countries immediately. To fail in this regard is to negate all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, dismiss the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and undermine the common good in their own State and in every State.

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