Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-seventh session
6–17 March 2023
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 World Eco-Design Conference, 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

As a non-governmental organization in Special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the World Eco-Design Conference aims to promote the integration and sustainable development of design, ecology and society on a global scale, strengthen exchanges and cooperation on eco-design among countries and regions, and make further contributions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. To respond to the theme of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the World Eco-Design Conference hereby addresses “Digital Design·Women Empowerment”.

The mandate of the World Eco-Design Conference is consistent with the mandate of the United Nations. The mission of the World Eco-Design Conference is also highly in line with the missions of the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UN Women, and the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries. With the great support of the relevant United Nations agencies, these partnerships have been constantly strengthened. In the past four years, the World Eco-Design Conference has been on track to achieving Digital Design·Women Empowerment through the Programme for Digital Design and Women’s Poverty Alleviation, One Village One Product Programme, International Design Education Programme and United Nations Industrial Development Organization Eco-Design Leading Talent Training Programme, to create sustainable productivity and economic value for women, and improve the status of women. The beneficiaries of the programmes cover rural women in China, young women in the least developed countries, and female workers of government, academia, and private sector of the world as well as the United Nations agencies. We affirm that design could inspire the potential of women, and women could make design more humanity-centred.

Hereinto, the Intentional Design Education Programme has been launched as a key programme of the World Eco-Design Conference since 2021, which offers 50 scholarships each year to students who hold bachelors or masters degree from 46 least developed countries to study industrial design engineering at postgraduate level, cultivates interdisciplinary design talents, for the purpose of providing significant support in science, technology and innovation for the least developed countries, improving their capabilities in innovation and problem solving, promoting their economic growth, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme recognizes that gender equality and the empowerment of women have a significant positive impact on sustained economic growth and inclusive industrial development, it promotes gender balance in academic and publishing opportunities, integrates the best practices of gender mainstreaming into its main activities and ensures that women and men have equal access, participation in, and benefit from the programme. To date, there have been 68 students from 19 least developed countries admitted to the programme, 10 of them are female.

The programme closely serves the purpose of the UN Women, that it aims to enhance women’s power, promote gender equality, and provide more development opportunities and wider vision for female students of the least developed countries. Ms. Malambo from Zambia expressed that she was happy to see women can break gender-based stereotyping, shift this mindset and take up engineering if they want to be an engineer and study engineering, during her interview with the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries for the International Women in Engineering Day.

She is hoping that she can leverage these design skills to contribute solutions to the pressing issues faced in Zambia: transportation systems, solutions to prevent power outages, and production and manufacture of everyday products. Other than
that, her design “Auspicious Cloud Light” has been selected as a permanent display in the former residence of Wang Yangming where is a major historical and cultural site protected at the national level in China. The impact of COVID-19 left Ms. Maseala and Ms. Tebello, who are from the Kingdom of Lesotho, unable to travel to China to study though, learning the programme online has allowed them to be more versatile learners. With support from the teachers who are always around to guide, Ms. Maseala is able to engage in hands-on projects at her farm, and Ms. Tebello undertakes an internship as a designer at a technology company. By the combination of theories learn at class, and practices, they have put their knowledge into all aspects of work. They have shown us the miniature of the new generation of young women of the least developed countries - full of vitality and hope.

Since the programme has systematically included gender mainstreaming strategy into various activities, the male students of the International Design Education Programme have also paid close attention to global issues of women. They proposed solutions encompassing “Women Design” and “Women Education” with what they have learnt and their ideas. Mr. Farhad from Bangladesh designed a smart bag reminder that uses pressure sensors to provide lighting feedback when any items are missing from the bag. So that they can adjust to their new roles with less stress.

At present, several International Design Education Programme students have been engaging into their startups, World Eco-Design Conference and Zhejiang University are in negotiations with the government, enterprises etc., to look for assistance on students’ startup business, e.g. venues in industrial park, business support, tax relief etc., so that it would be easier for the least developed countries students entrepreneurship. In addition, the programme also proposes to gather the young women of the least developed countries by promoting courses encompassing science, technology, engineering and mathematics, inspiring their learning interests in the information and communication technology. The programme assures that the female students will be benefit from the science, technology, engineering and mathematics activities, and consequently promotes the development of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in the least developed countries.

Recently, the Report on International Design Education Programme 2022 has been released at the official website of United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries. The Report was jointly edited by the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries, Ningbo Innovation Center, Zhejiang University and World Eco-Design Conference, and circulated to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UN Women, United Nations Resident Coordinators, Permanent Missions of China and the Least Developed Countries to the United Nations, and other relevant United Nations agencies. The global influence of the International Design Education Programme has been continually improving and has become a glorious name card in the area of international design education. The Third International Design Education Programme application is scheduled to begin in early January 2023, and we strongly encourage qualified female candidates to apply, and call for qualified partner institutes of the worldwide, and outstanding students from the least developed countries to promote and join the programme.

As an non-governmental organization with United Nations Economic and Social Council consultative status, the World Eco-Design Conference has committed to prioritize mainstreaming gender equality in our work and promote to achieve the 2030 Vision of “Leave no one behind”. We hereby again call for “Digital Design·Women Empowerment”. With the guidance of this mode, women, design, ecology, digital technology and creativity interconnect and interact with each other, assist women to develop in the digital age, and make contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations.