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Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, 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

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to the promotion and protection of human dignity and the upholding of human rights. We are committed to respecting the dignity of the person and fostering a culture in which men and women live in genuine freedom and solidarity. We believe that this Commission with its priority theme should focus on a gender equality approach that would enable all persons to have equal access to education, healthcare, and advancement opportunities, and to have the ability to contribute to their respective communities and the environment. Improving the quality, fairness and reach of existing protection systems, increasing access to public services and promoting sustainable infrastructure for the empowerment of women and girls allows us to achieve this equality with greater speed.

Human persons are diverse, yet we all share an inherent equalizer: human dignity. The intrinsic dignity possessed by all human beings establishes the basis for human rights. The acknowledgement of this foundation and human worth prompts the creation of just policies and laws in which the dignity of the person is sustained by the respective governing institutions.

Women's important and pivotal role within the family and social structures needs to be revered and upheld. Empowering women has a direct effect on sustaining equitable and just societies that allow for every person to flourish. Hence, educating men, women and children on the importance of women's presence and work creates respect, appreciation and, most notably, solidarity within familial and social structures. This advancement of women's rights is crucial for strengthening social institutions and eradicating poverty.

Human dignity lies at the core of values and principles of international law and human rights. It is essential that we recognize that every individual, regardless of gender, possesses inherent dignity and deserves to be treated with respect and equality. It is through upholding human dignity that we can create an environment where women can thrive and contribute to the betterment of society. In our pursuit of gender equality, we emphasize the importance of a person-centered approach to development. This means recognizing the unique needs, aspirations, and capabilities of each individual, and ensuring that policies and programs are designed to empower women to reach their full potential. By placing the person at the center of development efforts, we can address the true barriers that hinder women's progress and create opportunities for their meaningful participation in all spheres of life.

The World Youth Alliance joins the international community's efforts to discuss and achieve gender equality, and it does so through the lens of human dignity. As countries evaluate the opportunities for women offered by their respective social protection systems, quality of access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women, it is important to also recognize the unique circumstances of rural women and girls and create programs that are culturally sensitive and relevant.

Gender disparities increase the education gap between girls and boys and negatively impact the livelihood and economic security of future generations. In order to build societies and empower women and girls prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century, we need an integral approach to social and personal development. This approach must consider all aspects of the human person: the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional considerations, with special attention to the particular vulnerabilities that women face.

Women and girls have much to say and contribute and are able to do so more effectively when they are equal participants in education. In order to empower all children to leave a positive mark on the world, the World Youth Alliance offers the Human Dignity Curriculum, as a complement to standard instruction at schools. This curriculum has been taught online and in person, in both urban and rural areas. The Human Dignity Curriculum, for boys and girls ages 4 to 18, instils children with a context for personal identity and worldview. It is rooted in understanding our human dignity, allows us to act in ways that respect and affirm it, and to recognize that our freedom is an expression of acting in conformity with our human dignity.

The Human Dignity Curriculum inspires long-term goals, leads to excellent and healthy decision-making, and emphasizes that “action” follows “being.” Students cover topics such as human dignity, the hierarchy of living beings, intentional actions, persons as subjects vs. objects, friendship and heroes, human freedom, and human excellence. They learn about racism, slavery, human rights, modern challenges and are introduced to different heroes who fought against historical human rights abuses. The Human Dignity Curriculum teaches children to use their freedom and creativity to initiate positive change in their own lives and in their communities.

An education that promotes mutual respect for one another’s dignity simultaneously affects children’s use of digital technology. It makes it possible for children to understand that communication through the use of screens does not decrease the dignity of the person on the other side, nor create an excuse for that person to be used. Furthermore, in learning that humans, as opposed to animals or plants, have the “powers” to think and choose what is good, the Human Dignity Curriculum encourages children to identify and choose healthy behaviors. This makes it possible to educate children to have a healthy relationship with technology.

Another important component of the Human Dignity Curriculum that empowers girls and boys to make healthy decisions is World Youth Alliance’s sexuality education extension. It teaches age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and biologically accurate information about reproductive health. It provides valuable instruction on the menstrual cycle and women’s medical management care, and it encourages overall health through knowledge of the body. The curriculum features concepts such as self-understanding, respect for human dignity, and respecting the dignity of others while making informed decisions based on personal circumstances.

The World Youth Alliance believes that humanity, armed with creativity and individual awareness, is the world’s greatest resource, prompting innovation and resilience. During the 68th Commission on the Status of Women, the Member States of the United Nations will come together to discuss how to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions. We believe this can be accomplished by embracing holistic solutions like the Human Dignity Curriculum or other person-centered education programs, which impart girls and boys with the confidence to lead as changemakers in their communities. Ultimately, this is a way to invest in humans, which are the most precious and resilient capital we have and the only way to eradicate poverty.