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Statement submitted by Association For Life of Africa-Liberia, 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

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are a global concern. This concern has triggered institutions worldwide to intensify the campaign for women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality. The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of girls and women are intended to create an enabling and equal space in institutions, organizations, and governments for girls and women where their voices are heard during decision-making. It is also meant to develop the skills of girls and women to compete with their male counterparts on the global stage. In other words, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls call for the provision of equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities, and other basic social services to both women and men in all aspects of society and to eliminate discrimination against women in all forms in every sector.

It has been argued that women and girls have not had access to resources, education, and economic and political opportunities as men therefore making it difficult for them to actualize their full potential and participate fully in the economic, social, cultural, and political landscape as compared their males' counterparts (females). It is important for the world and major institutions to exert accelerated efforts in addressing the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls because these conditions, when not addressed, have the propensity to keep women and girls in perpetual poverty (United Nations Children's Fund Executive Board Second regular session 2021 7–10 September-Item 5 of the provisional agenda; UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025 E/ICEF/2021/31).

The UNICEF Gender Action Plan elaborates the steps required to accelerate progress on gender equality across the five Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, as well as within institutional systems and processes, with clear indicators and monitoring mechanisms to track change. It affirms that promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the responsibility of everyone, regardless of organizational role. Recognizing that gender equality has lifelong and intergenerational impacts, it promotes targeted actions to advance the leadership and well-being of adolescent girls, as girls are both disproportionately affected by gender inequality and have tremendous potential to be leaders for change.

Therefore, in order to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, poverty must be addressed through policies and programs that ensure that all individuals have access to the same resources, including food, medicine, education, and other crucial services. Furthermore, institutions and financing for gender equality and empowerment can help to create a gender-equal society. This involves investing in programs that increase the economic and political opportunities available to women, promoting gender-sensitive policies in education, health, and other areas, and increasing access to quality child and elderly care. These programs can help to increase the status of women and girls, encouraging them to achieve their full potential and actively participate in society.

This year's CSW68 celebration is critical because it focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, strengthening institutions and financing in an effort to address poverty. There is no better time to voice the need to create a space for everyone to freely interact irrespective of gender and to strengthen institutions financially in an effort to eradicate poverty than this time. The celebration comes at a time when the world is challenged by issues such as the marginalization of women and girls in institutions, lack of quality education, healthcare delivery, low economic empowerment, development, and the lack of basic social services.

The observance of the CSW68 further intensifies the many efforts being exerted by the UN, Governments, society groupings among other institutions against

injustices faced by women and girls face at their different locales. Society only becomes a better and safer place for everyone when the issues of poverty, gender equality, and empowerment target all genders because neglecting women and girls will definitely make them vulnerable and subsequently place them in harm-ways. Rovelli et al. (2021) asserted that gender equality has evolved as a major problem that has placed, and continues to place, women in a disadvantaged position thereby stymieing economic growth and societal advancement. The findings showed that though gender equality as a trending issue has been extensively studied for the past two decades, however, no clear-cut solutions were provided by researchers on how to tackle these gender issues. The overall objective of the advocacy regarding gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, and the strengthening of institutions through financing to eliminate poverty is to create a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life.

Likewise, UN Women (2018) on the relationship between gender equality and poverty observed that poverty and gender equality were inherently connected and at the same time, poverty and gender inequality were also linked. It was argued that women and girls would probably contribute to household incomes if they were to have their income. The advancement of women and girl's empowerment an element of gender equality saw an increasing rate of own incomes coupled with women's incomes contributing greater shares in the total household income between 2000 to 2010/2014. The implication of the findings is that poverty was tackled since women and girls are considered the most vulnerable and disadvantaged persons compared to their male and boys' colleagues, who are now given the space to compete with others on the global stage. In institutions, countries, governments, etc., where women and girls earn an income of their own, relative poverty rates are lower. A country becomes prosperous and productive when women and girls are empowered with programs that enable them to earn incomes to contribute to the economic growth and development of their countries.

In various settings, such as households, marital unions, and institutions, the exclusion of women and girls from decision-making processes, as well as their limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, can potentially lead to the manifestation of poverty within these aforementioned institutions. This is primarily due to the fact that only a specific group of individuals is granted certain privileges, thereby perpetuating socioeconomic disparities.

Gender equality, when not addressed, leads to gender inequalities. The world needs to develop long-lasting programs that eradicate gender inequalities. In an effort to address the issue poverty:

- Women and girls should be given equality access to education, healthcare, decent work, and representation in the political and economic decision making-making process as advanced by the UN.
- In institutions, workplaces, and schools, zero-tolerance toward gender equality should be instituted. This will help to protect women and girls against injustices meted upon them by society. Over the decades, people and institutions have seen the fight for gender equality, and women's and girls' empowerment as just a mere fight on the ground that there were no strong laws that spoke against these injustices against women and girls. Also, though there were existing laws that supported gender equality they were not strong enough to combat injustices against women and girls.
- The 2015 United Nations' 17 Global goals that address the eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 should be buttressed by everyone. Once these global goals are met, poverty will be abolished and gender equality will be promoted because the gap between men and women will be bridged.

Promoting women and girls' empowerment by strengthening institutions by financing them to fight poverty will empower women and girls thereby making half of the world's population including men and women graduate from the disadvantaged position to a more privileged position. Anything outside of the achievement of the UN 2015 Global goals which focuses on creating political, economic, social, education, and healthcare balance between men and women.

Extreme poverty disproportion should be addressed because they prevent women from accessing many opportunities such as education, work, and the owning of property as men. Many at times girls are neglected at a young age due to the limited resources. Many families who live in poverty prefer to educate the boys since the resources available are not sufficient enough to cater for both girls and boys.

Empower those institutions (police and others security instructions) that are concerned with the fight against gender inequalities.

Empower the Ministry of Justice to dispose cases involving gender inequality to send a clear message to those who are violating gender equality laws.
