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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 International Council of Women, 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 International Council of Women, ICW-CIF, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, has been committed to advancing women's equal rights and empowerment since its establishment in 1888. ICW-CIF firmly believes that the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are indispensable keys to facilitating progress toward sustainable global development.

ICW-CIF welcomes the priority theme of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective," a theme which puts the focus on the crucial issue of eradicating poverty, as defined in Sustainable Development Goal 1. It also welcomes the review theme, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" (agreed conclusions of the 63rd session), and believes that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women in all aspects, are effective ways to combat poverty and to stimulate development and social change.

As women constitute the majority of people living in extreme poverty, and with the view of implementing the strategic objectives of the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations specialized agencies, a decade ago, had initiated programs to ensure the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in various frameworks. However, the eradication of poverty still requires the implementation and integration of strategies at national and international levels, and with the conviction that each woman and each girl, must be aware of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to live in dignity and to benefit from development.

Unfortunately, despite the significant efforts of the international community and of aid agencies, according to latest UN-Women projections, poverty deepens for women and girls. A recent United Nations report, "The Gender Snapshot 2023," warns that "if current trends continue, over 340 million women and girls – an estimated 8% of the world's female population – will live in extreme poverty by 2030, and close to one in four will experience moderate or severe food insecurity..." But, and despite these facts and projections for the future, ICW-CIF believes that with a constructive policy, appropriate intervention and a strong impetus to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the situation can be reversed for the better. To this end, ICW-CIF draws attention to the simulation analysis held by UN-Women, United Nations Development Programme and the Pardee Center for International Futures, which "shows that an integrated policy approach, including more spending on social protection, investments in the green economy, better infrastructure and education, would lift close to 150 million women and girls out of poverty by 2030."

So, what is a blueprint for action? A collection of blueprints stressing the joining of forces, working together with UN agencies, civil society and various stakeholders, is an essential step in working towards the strengthening of institutions and financing with a gender perspective, one which responds to the imperative needs of women and girls at the national and local levels, and by so doing, aims to accelerate the desired achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

In such context, the International Council of Women urges all stakeholders to join efforts in:

- Ensuring the full participation of women in all decision-making, including sustainable development decision-making.
- Prioritizing gender equality and women's rights through relevant policies and effective programs.

Ensuring meaningful participation of women's organizations in the design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs.

Setting-up concrete means of implementation that prioritize the necessary public financing and overcome exclusion of women and girls.

Promoting innovative financing mechanisms, and flexible support for civil society associations, including women's organizations.

Ensuring women's equal access to information and quality formal and non-formal education.

Formulating and implementing gender-sensitive economic policies ensuring equal economic opportunities for women, (and taking into consideration the needs of women in rural and remote areas).

Developing and improving social protection, public services and support frameworks for women and girls.

Taking measures to empower women as both producers and consumers in the economic sphere.

Towards these ends, ICW-CIF and its affiliates throughout the world believe that the key to making accountability systems work for women lies in the strength of women's collective action worldwide. Therefore, the International Council of Women continues to be engaged in eliminating deep-rooted gender inequalities and calls for effective cooperation among UN-Women, United Nations specialized agencies, civil society organizations, central and local governments to work jointly in developing a holistic approach for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (Sustainable Development Goal 5), a most worthy approach that is in line with the priority theme as well as with the review theme of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.