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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social
Development and the twenty-fourth special session
of the General Assembly: priority theme: strategies
for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable
development for all**

Statement submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI), 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

Graduate Women International: Education as A Means to The Eradication of Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All Girls and Women

Issue:

The evidence is clear, poverty reduces a girl's opportunity to attend school. According to the most recent World Bank estimates, approximately 10.67 percent of the world's population — about 746 million people — live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.90 international dollars per day. Globally, about 44 percent of those people categorized as extremely poor are children younger than 15 years of age, amounting to some 328 million (World Bank). Additionally, of the adults considered extremely poor, almost 40 percent have never attended school or received a formal education. While the percentage of unschooled people globally has decreased — representing the impact of programs and policies promoting universal education — figures also show the meagre impact of such policies as a means to lift people out of poverty. Considering this evidence, the Graduate Women International (GWI) declares that the mere access to education is insufficient to the eradication of poverty and reaffirms its previous statements that the quality of the education is the key contributor to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 1, No Poverty, along with SDGs 4, Quality Education, and 5, Gender Equality, while acknowledging the interrelatedness of all 17 SDGs.

Essential to the elimination of poverty is a focus on safe access to quality education as a means of promoting fundamental human rights to development, providing girls and women with the resources and knowledge necessary to transform their lives.

Cause:

One of the most significant barriers to improving international cooperation for social development is the sector-wide occurrence of corruption. According to Transparency International, government spending on education comprises approximately 20 to 30 percent of many national budgets and education systems are highly susceptible to corruption. Corruption in education emerges in many forms and affects all areas of education, including: school financing and infrastructure; recruitment, retainment and training of teachers and educators; distribution of resources and equipment, administration and admission to universities (UNESCO).

These instances of corruption reduce the number and quality of female teachers; preventing the realization of their full social development and trapping them in the continued cycle of poverty which, consequently, disallows them to become agents of positive change for other girls in their communities. With underqualified or absent teachers, students are denied the sufficient instructional time that is necessary to development and learning. Through inequitable distribution of study materials and teaching equipment, the poorest students are often left with insufficient materials necessary to fully grasp lessons. Overcrowded classes and dilapidated school buildings are dangerous and un conducive to learning. Additionally, when corruption is tolerated and allowed to run rampant in education systems, quality students are overlooked or, worse, categorically denied access to schools and universities because culture norms related to the poor and because of lack of funds or connections, stripping them of their right to development and education.

Impoverished girls are hazardously marginalized. Limitations created by instances of poverty due to corruption prevent them exponentially from obtaining the same educational benefits as their peers, perpetuating globalizing of poverty and denying social development.

GWI Position and Recommendations:

Embracing the “leave no one behind” mission of the 2030 Agenda and with its 98-year history in the promotion and advocacy of girls’ education, GWI uses this voice to speak out about the interconnection of poverty, corruption and education. GWI makes these recommendations to States and local governments as steps towards the full development of women and girls including women from indigenous communities, refugees, women with disabilities, elderly women, and all other marginalized groups who are all too often forgotten or left out of the narrative:

- Guarantee the availability of quality secondary and tertiary education to all girls and women and enforce mandatory primary and secondary education.
- Ensure safe access to quality education for girls and women through enforcement of laws that protect against varying forms of gender-based violence, including: early and forced marriage, human trafficking, domestic abuse, sexual harassment/assault, and female genital mutilation.
- Include an educational approach in all aspects of poverty eradication through the implementation of finance and economic courses teaching girls financial literacy.
- Identify and prosecute instances of corruption in the educational system.
- Offer women equal access to the labour market and pay with the opportunity for employment suitable to her education and abilities.
- Actively engage and support NGOs within the educational sector as partners and subject experts.
- Broaden accountability by developing additional, complementary SDG indicators.
- Establish a mechanism that requires all schools to register with national and local authorities.
- Implement clear complaint mechanisms for students, parents and teachers.
- Institute sanctions for bribery.
- Establish legal frameworks to recruit and advance careers based on merit.
- Examine and strengthen their policies of recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting female educators within their school system in order to provide young girls with role models of salaried women in positions of responsibility and influence.

Along with the negative impact that poverty has on girls’ education, GWI considers that the relationship goes the opposite way as well: girls who receive a quality education are more likely to break out of a poverty cycle. Educated girls are more likely to find employment to support themselves and their families, engage positively in the community, and continue to educate others.

GWI calls for the elimination of poverty through the education and the full inclusion and empowerment of girls and women around the world; and invites States and organizations worldwide to engage with GWI as a means to eradicate poverty worldwide.