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Statement submitted by the *Consell Nacional de Dones de Catalunya* [National Women’s Council of Catalonia], 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.



Statement

The Millennium Declaration signed in the year 2000 commits Member States of the United Nations to take new measures and to increase their efforts to combat poverty, hunger, illiteracy, illness, child and maternal mortality, discrimination against women, and degradation of the environment, and calls upon rich countries to adopt measures to alleviate the debt of poor countries. These eight Millennium Development Goals, recognized in the Declaration, are supposed to be achieved throughout the world by the year 2015.

The world economic crisis, which began in 2008, was also felt in our country, which entered into recession at the end of that year. For this reason, and given the lack of opportunities, more than half a million people, primarily migrants, have left Catalonia in the last five years. That figure represents 7.3 per cent of the country's population, according to data from the Statistics Institute of Catalonia, and it could rise further if the labour outlook does not improve: at the present time the unemployment rate is 23.85 per cent (as of the second quarter of 2013). In light of the situation in the country, we will now assess some of the data concerning the Millennium Development Goals.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty

According to the Europe 2020 strategy, the at-risk-of-poverty rate has risen by 4.5 percentage points in three years in Catalonia, from 22.2 per cent in 2009 to 26.7 per cent in 2011. In Spain, this increase was 3.6 percentage points (from 23.4 per cent in 2009 to 27 per cent in 2011), while in the euro zone it was 1.5 percentage points (from 21.2 per cent in 2009 to 22.7 per cent in 2011).

One factor that can most help reduce household poverty is access to the labour market. Access to a paid and decent job is, in our society, an essential element against poverty and social exclusion, but again the data are not encouraging: during 2011, 10.5 per cent of the Catalan population lived in very low work intensity households (where adults between the ages of 18 and 59 years have worked less than 20 per cent of their total work potential during the past year). In Spain, the figure for that same year was 12.2 per cent, and in the European Union it was 10 per cent.

Two other figures (again taken from the Statistics Institute of Catalonia) confirm the slippage in the state of well-being: average net annual income and average household expenditure. What do families have as means of livelihood during a year? In Catalonia, in 2011, the needs per person were calculated at €10,101 (€15,133 per consumption unit), and in Spain, €9,446 per person and €14,251 per consumption unit. What is the average annual expenditure of these families? In Catalonia in that year it was €31,729 per person (€18,371 per consumption unit) and in Spain, €11,137 per person and €16,873 per consumption unit.

Given these figures, it is not surprising that the at-risk-of-poverty gap in 2011 was 31.5 per cent in Catalonia. The data from a gender perspective show that women are clearly worse off:

- At-risk-of-poverty rate: 20.3 per cent (total: 19.1 per cent);
- Households with difficulties making it to the end of the month: 24.2 per cent (total: 21.7 per cent).

Yet the prejudice to women's development also lies in policies that imply backsliding in recently achieved rights, which would allow women to integrate themselves fully into the labour market and would encourage their economic independence and personal empowerment.

This situation is compounded by other factors that make the outlook for women currently living in our country highly negative, much more than for men. Firstly, there are substantial differences between men and women in terms of the organization and responsibility for household chores and care-giving. Secondly, wage differentials continue to exacerbate the risk of poverty among the female population.

On the other hand, beyond women's development, we must also take into account the development of their children, who are suffering a decline in their quality of life that will have serious repercussions for their future.

2. Universal primary education

According to the study on "post-compulsory education in Catalonia: inequalities in education performance beyond ESO", girls earn better grades in ESO (compulsory secondary education) and are 1.5 times more likely to obtain the ESO diploma than boys. Moreover, the number of girls who intend to pursue the baccalaureate is double that of boys, which means that in the next stage of education the female presence is greater: while girls represent 49.8 per cent of the student body in the fourth year of ESO, at the baccalaureate level they constitute 53.5 per cent.

It is fine to know that girls achieve good scholastic results, but the negative side of the coin is that stereotypes persist and girls still select areas that lead to lower-paid occupations. There is no normalized female presence in technological careers and in engineering, nor is there any normalized male presence in humanities, and this imbalance carries into the workplace. Above all, it means that in the day-to-day life of families there is no reorganization and sharing of time use and care-giving responsibilities between women and men.

3. Policies for equality and empowerment

The Beijing Declaration stresses that the empowerment and advancement of women are essential for achieving equality of opportunity between men and women. This includes participation in decision-making and access to power, in order to achieve a world that is fairer and free of violence. Women's empowerment has a personal dimension but also has a collective dimension that revolves around social and political actions that promote women's autonomy and involvement in all fields.

The Council of Europe has set as a balanced percentage a minimum female participation rate of 40 per cent. Although there has been a positive increase in recent years, looking at political institutions in Catalonia, there is much room for improvement in the empowerment of women and in raising their profile in positions of power and decision-making.

In the 2011 municipal elections, female mayors represented 14.2 per cent of the total versus 85.8 per cent for men. While there has been progress (the female rate was only 4 per cent in 1991-1995), the figure is still low. The Catalanian

Parliament is close to achieving parity: in the current legislature (2012-2016), women hold 40 per cent of the seats.

According to recent studies (2012) the female presence in Catalanian businesses is only 29 per cent. In firms with more than 250 employees and where there is an equality plan, female participation is 13 per cent. As well, in the boards of directors of public corporations majority-owned by the Catalanian Government (*Generalitat*) women account for 24 per cent of the members. Thus, another 865 women would have to be added to the boards of large Catalanian companies (those with more than 250 workers) to achieve gender parity (40 per cent).

Analysis by sector shows that women are least well represented in construction and in energy. Only one of every five firms has women on its executive board. In the services sector, the female presence is no higher than 35 per cent.

The *Consell Nacional de Dones de Catalunya* [National Women's Council of Catalonia], the participation and consultation body of the *Institut Català de les Dones* [Catalonian Women's Institute], which embraces more than 300 women's organizations, is issuing a call to:

- Optimize public resources and services so that, despite tough economic times, they will not impose a negative impact on women's quality-of-life;
- Adopt co-educational schooling in favour of equality and gender differentiation, which will do away with stereotypes and assigned roles for women and men, thereby avoiding male-dominated forms and contents;
- Achieve balanced representation between the sexes (40 per cent-60 per cent) in all decision-making bodies and forums to facilitate shared responsibility between men and women.
