



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-eighth session

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women  
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic  
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further  
actions and initiatives**

### **Statement submitted by Pax Romana, 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**

### **Introduction: one step forward, two steps back**

The primary purpose of the Millennium Development Goals was to usher in a new era of development that eradicates extreme poverty and allows for greater equality among the peoples of this world. Although the Millennium Development Goals have led to significant progress and development, numerous obstacles remain in terms of how implementation of the goals have benefited and continue to benefit women, girls and young women. Currently, the lack of gender equality and equity at all levels of society remains a contentious issue globally and prevents women, girls and young women from becoming not only beneficiaries of development but also agents of development.

Pax Romana, a unique Catholic non-government organization that comprises both a student movement and professional movement, fully understands that education is the key to providing women, girls and young women with the tools necessary to become empowered agents of change. Even the Secretary-General, in his recent report entitled “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing United Nations development beyond 2015” ([A/68/202](#)), has recognized that women and girls are major drivers of development. Certainly, education has a central role to play in allowing women, girls and young women become these critical drivers of development. Nonetheless, in many countries, tertiary education for young women and girls is a challenge and access to higher education appears utopian. Lack of quality education has deprived women, girls and young women of their ability to contribute to the welfare of their communities and countries as a whole. Moreover, in the global macroeconomic context, especially in consideration of the need to move towards a transformative post-2015 development agenda, it is critical to transition from the old rhetoric of growth-centric development. Progress must be qualified through human development, life satisfaction and harmony with the natural world. This requires that our ecological footprint be reduced, which is beyond the biocapacity of the Earth as of now, and that patterns of sustainable consumption and production be created. Degraded environments lead to degraded economics and trap the most vulnerable in a cyclic pattern of poverty. Undoubtedly, the full realization of a development paradigm where women are drivers of change cannot occur while the world is mired in continuous conflict over finite resources.

### **Moving forward: women, girls, and young women in the post-2015 development agenda**

The era of the Millennium Development Goals is almost over and the world is now in the process of preparing the post-2015 development agenda. As a result, while it is critical to highlight the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, it is even more crucial to understand how the challenges surrounding the implementation of the Goals can be overcome so as to formulate a development agenda that is inclusive of the needs of women, girls and young women. Women, girls and young women have a major role to play in development, yet they continue to face a high level of discrimination that prevents their contributions from making an impact on their societies. While we acknowledge that, in developing regions, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 47 per cent in 1990 to

22 per cent in 2010, we must note that women still represent 70 per cent of the world's poor.

Women, girls and young women must be allowed to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and their societies as a whole. Young women and girls must be considered equal partners in the development of a post-2015 framework. This will help improve the conditions in which women, girls and young women live and empower them to help the post-2015 development agenda be as effective and meaningful as possible. Pax Romana recognizes the achievements of partner organizations in their efforts to empower young women and girls. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations have been at the centre of development for decades and are eager to continue playing a positive role in the formulation of the post-2015 framework. That is why we are so involved in the 2014 World Conference on Youth, to be held in Sri Lanka, which is intended to allow young people to work directly with policymakers from Governments, United Nations agencies and other sectors that affect the lives of young people.

Pax Romana is convinced that only through meaningful global partnerships can sustainable development be achieved. For this reason, the post-2015 agenda must be based on gender equality so that women, girls and young women can be fully included in this partnership for sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

In conclusion, Pax Romana urges Member States to:

(a) Live up to their commitment to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as outlined in General Assembly resolution [68/6](#), on the outcome document of the special event to follow-up on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. While several targets have been met or are within reach, stronger political action is necessary if this acceleration is to lead to any fruitful human development for women, girls and young women.

(b) Give young women and girls the opportunity to play a role in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations have been instrumental in development. It is critical that Member States recognize their efforts and provide them with more meaningful mechanisms through which they can identify problems with the current development agenda and contribute to building the new development paradigm, which should include specific enabling policies that will help actualize it.

(c) Heed the recommendation contained in the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including a call for a data revolution and to begin collecting data that is disaggregated by both gender and age across all development goals, both current and future. Development cannot be effectively measured until data is credible, accurate and specific to target groups.

(d) Reform domestic legal frameworks so as to accommodate the needs of women, girls and young women, especially in terms of education. Laws must be pro-women, and if education is to lead to the empowerment of women, girls and young women, legal frameworks need to be reformed with their needs in mind.

Learning environments have to be sensitive to the unique requirements of girls through the different phases of adolescence.

(e) Reform domestic legal frameworks so as to accommodate the needs of women in the workplace and protect against gender-based discrimination. In order to truly be inclusive of women and promote their role, workplaces need to better accommodate their needs. Child and infant-friendly workplaces must be promoted and encouraged, including maternity and paternity leave options. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that women earn up to 40 per cent less for the same job performed by men. This discrimination must come to an end.

(f) Allow women, especially young women, to play an active role in decision-making at all levels of society. Governments must ensure the full and effective participation of women, girls and young women in political deliberations. Young women must especially be permitted to have a say in decisions that affect their lives for years to come.

(g) Allow women, girls and young women living in refugee camps and those suffering from the effects of armed conflict to participate in meaningful education programmes so as to empower them to become primary actors in peacebuilding. Young people can be agents of peace, and young women and girls especially should be granted the opportunity to build bridges among communities in conflict.

(h) Stem sexual violence in all forms and in absolute terms, whether during armed conflict or not. The approaches will differ in different contexts but Member States must actively tackle all of the factors that lead to sexual violence.

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