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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 Salesian Missions, 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

Migration and the Millennium Development Goals

When considering the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls, the reality of migration must be carefully assessed.

It is said that migration is the oldest action against poverty in human history. More than a billion people rely on international and domestic migration fuelled by a desire to improve the income, health and education of their families; escape poverty and conflict; or adapt to environmental and economic shocks.

More women than ever are now migrating. According to some estimates, women now constitute nearly half of the international migrant population, and in some countries the percentage is as high as 70 or 80 per cent. In addition, an increasing number of young girls, especially urban girls, are migrating. Research shows that now more 15- to 19-year-old urban girls are migrants than urban boys of the same ages.

If migrant workers often find themselves accepting jobs that are dirty, dangerous or degrading, it is an even more common reality for women and girl migrants. They often work in low-status and low-wage jobs, such as factory and service jobs such as domestic work that is gender-segregated. In some cases, there are women and girls who are treated as virtual slaves in their work. Given this reality, women and girls are exposed to a much higher risk of exploitation, violence and abuse.

Women and girl migrants are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, deceived by unscrupulous recruiters who promise one form of work only to trap many of the unsuspecting into a life of sexual exploitation. The multimillion-dollar industry fuelled by traffickers is pernicious because it is controlled by those who exploit the poverty of others, individuals for whom the poverty of others is a source of income. Trafficked women and girls are often exposed to sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. And because of the clandestine nature of trafficking, victims have little access to medical or legal services.

Migration can also empower

While migration can be an experience of vulnerability, it can also empower adolescent girls and women economically. Working migrant women and girls generate savings that allow them to exercise agency in meeting their basic needs and planning for the future. Additionally, many migrant girls take their responsibilities to their families quite seriously. Many provide for ageing parents and pay for the schooling of their siblings.

Remittances sent to families by migrant women and girls have helped raise the living standards of their families, especially in rural areas. Those contributions are often used to feed, clothe and educate children as well as provide for their health care. Remittances help grow local economies thus transforming impoverished communities into more sustainable ones. For some developing countries, remittances from migrants are a major source of capital, and for many countries, they are larger than foreign direct investment or development assistance. Additionally, the flow of technological,

social and human capital back to countries of origin is having a significant impact on poverty reduction and economic development.

Recent data indicates that women send a higher proportion of their earnings back to their families in their home countries than men. Also, rural families are much more likely to receive remittances from internal migrants than from international migrants. Poverty eradication is often due to the efforts of women.

Migration in a post-2015 world

Given the number of people on the move, it is clear that migration must be an essential element in broader planning policies for our shared future. Migration has had and is having an impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It must be attended to in the post-2015 development strategies. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs noted that migration, when governed fairly, can make a very important contribution to social and economic development both in the countries of origin and in the countries of destination. Migration broadens the opportunities available to individuals and is a crucial means of broadening access to resources and reducing poverty.

The round-table series conducted by the International Organization for Migration in partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and the United Nations Population Fund in preparation for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held in October 2013, was an essential component in the work to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, especially women and children. Addressing the issues of the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and confronting the migration “business” will help ensure regular, orderly and safe migration for all, lessening the abuse and exploitation of the most vulnerable seeking a better life.

The High-level Dialogue underscored the seriousness with which the world community must address migration. The wide range of participants in the High-level Dialogue, including States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, highlighted that migration is a multi-stakeholder phenomenon that must be addressed on every level in all of its dimensions. If women and girls are to be agents of change and development in both their sending and receiving countries, all stakeholders must be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and policies around migration.

Given that there are migrant women and girls who confront difficult circumstances, for example, sexual exploitation, life on the streets and low-wage work that borders on servitude, who say that they prefer what they are doing to the life they left behind, it is clear that societal structures need to be examined. Any policies that prevent women and girls from developing all their potential or prevent them from having an equal say in their society, when women and girls see choosing between less-than-desirable alternatives as a form of exercising agency, we must rethink our societal attitudes and behaviours. And migrant women and girls must participate in the design of policies and programmes that affect them. When women and girls are empowered to add their voices to the discussions, more effective solutions are possible.

Recommendations

The empowering of women and girls and their participation at all levels of policymaking is essential to making further progress in achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and articulating sustainable development goals in a post-2015 world. The voices of migrant women and girls must be included. To achieve this, we recommend that Governments:

- Address the serious issues women and girls face in the migration process
- Confront human rights abuses committed against women and girls who migrate and remove impunity from officials who do not protect the human rights of vulnerable populations
- Ensure that social protection nets be enforced for all migrants regardless of migration status; the implementation of International Labour Organization Recommendation 202 concerning national floors for social protection is an important first step in achieving that goal
- Enact and enforce laws to stop the trafficking of women and girls; the prosecution of traffickers and the provision of just remuneration to those who were exploited is essential to end that scourge
- Avoid the criminalization of migrants and seek alternative means to address irregular migration
- Create national and international structures to ensure that girls and women are equal partners at the decision-making table to address a just, equitable and sustainable development agenda
- Address the systemic and structural forces in their societies that sustain discrimination, exclusion and inequality that prevent women and girls from having an equal voice or equal opportunities
- Collaborate in ensuring regular, orderly and safe migration for all
- Redirect a portion of their military expenditures to the funding of programmes that will help achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- Implement Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#), [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1889 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2010\)](#) and [2106 \(2013\)](#) for the prevention of all forms of violence against girls and women.

Note: Statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.