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for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by **Equidad de Genero: Ciudadania, Trabajo y Familia**, 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

Macroeconomic and structural challenges for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains a challenge, even 20 years after its adoption. The primary reason for this is that its macroeconomic vision has yet to be integrated into legal, fiscal and programmatic frameworks at the global, regional, national and local levels. While there have been advances at the micro and meso levels, especially in urban settings, gender gaps remain. The omission of a gender perspective from structural measures, such as trade or debt revisions, or from considerations of primary and secondary sectors such as energy or infrastructure, lies behind the difficulty in overcoming the gaps. According to the United Nations Development Programme, only 2 per cent of arable land and only 10 per cent of circulating currency are in the hands of women. A clear political will to change structures is needed.

An element to be considered in the macroeconomic logic is the eradication of the sexual division of labour as the primary factor in gender inequality. Women subsidize the entire economy by carrying the burden of unpaid domestic and care work on their shoulders. In Mexico, according to the latest national satellite account, done in 2012, unpaid domestic and care work equals almost 22 per cent of the gross domestic product. Despite these figures, public policies perpetuating the sexual division of labour, based on discriminatory stereotypes of women and men, increase the share of unpaid domestic and care work performed by women. Current global challenges such as climate change are not met with a transformative sustainable development approach, and Governments still rely on women as the last stronghold in the resilience chain. Efforts aimed at mitigation (currently the recipient of 80 per cent or more of the financing directed towards climate change), instead of promoting measures for including women in the governance and ownership of clean energy policies (or in a scheme of energy transition), only consider women in measures for improving access to energy. Providing clean stoves, the most common measure cited as a “gender-equality solution”, is a perfect example of how public policies perpetuate the sexual division of labour, relying upon and increasing unpaid domestic and care work. In that regard, sharing unpaid domestic and care work between the State, the private sector, communities, households, women and men is key to eradicating gender gaps.

In addition, there has been no systematic effort to reduce the concentration of wealth and measure its social and environmental impact. According to a Credit Suisse report, 1 per cent of the population in the world owns almost half (48.2 per cent) of the global wealth, whereas the bottom 50 per cent of the population owns less than 1 per cent of global assets. The gender dimension is still opaque, but some figures are starting to surface. In the United States of America, for example, of eight multi-billionaires, two are women, and of every three multi-billionaire women, two inherited their wealth. Along with what has been called the “feminization of poverty”, the gender gap challenges within the primary and secondary sectors of economy seem nearly insurmountable. As in the case of the energy sector, it is not a matter of integrating women into unsustainable patterns of consumption, production or accumulation, but rather of making a transition to a more sustainable, equal and equitable world.

As a structural agenda, the sexual division of labour is intimately linked to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Resistance to guaranteeing women's full bodily freedom and autonomy is rooted in the sexual division of labour and the perpetuation of stereotypical gender roles. Evidently, domestic and care activities are intertwined with sexual and reproductive agendas. This is why, in order to effectively have an impact on the macroeconomic dimension with a gender equality approach, it is necessary to fully guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In the light of all that has been mentioned, what is the current scenario before us? The Open Working Group has proposed 17 goals with targets and means of implementation for the new sustainable development agenda. Of those, target 5.4 refers to unpaid domestic and care work; but, rather than addressing the issue head-on by calling for the reduction and redistribution of such work between the State, private sector, communities, households, women and men, it only calls for unpaid care and domestic work to be recognized and valued. This means that if the text retains its current language, no structural change in the gender equality agenda would be systematically promoted over the next 15 years as part of global development strategies. Another sign of the obstacles to tackling macroeconomic challenges is that Governments have decided to subsume the implementation of measures under national frameworks. In that regard, if the measures are tied to existing legislation, there would be no possibility for real change in the future. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have set a macroeconomic agenda, and now we must reach for this opportunity. This is why target 5.4 should be reformulated in the true spirit of Beijing.

Target 5.6, which reads: "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences". It is evident that target 5.6 limits the full acknowledgement of sexual and reproductive health and rights and that, by tying it to two international agreements, it limits the more advanced interpretation. This is why it is essential to amend the language so that it fully guarantees sexual and reproductive rights for all persons, so that it reads: "Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights".

Other goals should also integrate a gender perspective for macroeconomic change. Such is the case for the goals referring to climate change, infrastructure, energy, inequalities in and between countries and at the core of the means of implementation. It is evident that gender should be mainstreamed into every goal with a macro approach; but the challenge remains to translate such integration in order to finally eradicate the sexual division of labour. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a mandate to States. Its macroeconomic dimension is critical to fulfilling the gender equality agenda. In the coming years, it is clear that the path for the post-2015 agenda must be paved by Beijing and Cairo if we are fully committed to its advancement.