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Statement submitted by International Federation of Business and Professional Women, 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

Agreed by consensus on August 2, 2015, after a two year process of negotiation with an unprecedented participation of Civil Society, the outcome document of “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” has been adopted by the leaders of the world at the United Nations Summit on September 25-27, 2015. Based on the Millennium Development Goals, the new sustainable development goals aim to complete what the Millennium Development Goals did not achieve, and go much further: end poverty by 2030 and promote shared economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection for all countries. The new agenda is based on 17 goals and 169 targets, including a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as gender sensitive targets in other goals.

The main objective of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women is the 5th goal of the Sustainable Development Goals to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by economic, social and political measures. We recognize that the other Sustainable Development Goals are closely intertwined with this 5th goal.

Economic empowerment (concerns Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17)

One-third of all the businesses worldwide are owned by women; most of these are small to micro size. Up to 50 per cent of women’s productivity is untapped. There is an incredible potential to be unclosed which would help to create additional jobs, make innovations in the economy and almost double the national GDPs. But there are barriers which hinder women from going forward such as discriminatory laws (property laws, etc.), limited access to financial resources and limited facilities for child/family care that hinder their role in economic productivity.

We are concerned that pay equity has not yet been achieved; to date there is no equal pay for work of equal value in the majority of countries. In 2008, the first Equal Pay Day was organized in Germany inspired by the Red Purse Campaign in the United States to raise awareness, and in 2009, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women launched a global Equal Pay Day campaign. We continue to highlight both the fact of unequal pay and related root causes. In 2015 Business Professional Women’s Federations organized many events to promote equal pay in Europe, Asia and the U.S.

We recognize labour market segregation, missing care-giving infrastructures as well as unpaid care and domestic work as major root causes for unequal pay and call upon Governments for appropriate actions at the national level.

Therefore, we strongly encourage governments to:

- Develop an alternative macro-economic framework based on a women’s human rights approach that institutionalizes feminist economics at all levels and in all policy domains, particularly in tax and fiscal domains. Ensure transparency and facilitate monitoring by women’s organizations.
- Institutionalize and implement gender responsive budgeting at all levels and in all policy domains.

- Promote a preferential treatment in government procurement policies for women owners of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises by having a certain percentage of all government procurements.
- Ensure the equal representation for women on boards of companies.
- Promote entrepreneurship and ensure allocation of funds and access to finance for women entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses, as well as women owners of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Set up policies to insure the increase of the role of women in the value-chain and create special programs for women in the informal sector and for grass roots and rural women.
- Consider women as a key partner in the inclusive and sustainable industrial development in line with sustainable development goal 9 (UNIDO).
- Eliminate the gender pay gap and create appropriate conditions for equal employment in the formal economy, take necessary steps to ensure equal pay for work of equal value and implement specific economic policies and measures for the lowest income segment.
- Ensure labour market policies and practices, recognize and value motherhood and family management, recognize the economic value of unpaid care work, and ensure opportunities and support to balance these responsibilities with flexible work and careers and take effective measures to close the gender pension gap.
- Adopt, implement and enforce laws on social protection and against gender-based discrimination in the labour market and within the economy, including the in-formal economy.
- Ensure and monitor investment, trade policies and practices; respect local ownership and management of natural resources, including water, minerals, energy resources and forests by both men and women.
- Regulate and hold companies accountable for women's rights and abuses, including banks and multi-nationals, especially in extractive industries in countries around the world. Use the United Nations Guiding Principle for Business and Human Rights as a basis for legal frameworks.

Social Empowerment (concerns sustainable development goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17)

Access to education

Quality education, equal access and participation in science and technology for women of all ages are not only imperative for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women but also are an economic necessity, providing women with the knowledge and understanding necessary for lifelong learning, employment, better physical and mental health and sustainable development as well as full participation in social, economic and political development. We are in full accordance with UNESCO's actions and partnerships in education through its joint programs with UN-Women, UNFPA and the World Bank) « Empowering adolescent girls and women through education » (2015) and its « Promise to deliver on Gender

Equality through its Gender Equality Action Plans GEAPI 2008-2013 and GEAPII 2014-2021».

Therefore we encourage governments to:

- Set up legislation and enforce the laws for mandatory enrolment of all girls in primary schools.
- Encourage Governments to adopt the necessary legislation and executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices for gender sensitive allocation and /or reallocation of resources.
- Eliminate all causes of young girls' dropping out of education, including child labour and early child marriage, by creating incentives for families and ensuring a sanitary healthy environment for female students.
- Ensure quality education at all levels for girls, including Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics education, and enhance technical and vocational training for girls by allocating sufficient resources for and monitoring the implementation of educational reforms.
- Support and encourage educational programs to increase the digital and scientific literacy of women and girls.
- Enhance the use of information and communications technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women and girls.
- Examine all curricula in order to eliminate all gender stereotypes. Furthermore, a module on gender equality should be added to all curricula that are used in formal, informal, vocational training, adult education and in-service training programs.
- Provide incentives for lifelong learning and development of leadership skills.

Access to Health Care

In the Accountability Progress Report in 2015, the World Health Organization reviewed progress on implementation of the 10 recommendations made by the Commission on Information and Accountability on linking investments to results for women's and children's health. In 2011 the number of countries with data under the System of Health Accounts nearly doubled, from 18 to 33 countries, providing a clearer picture of domestic health expenditures and improving prospects for harmonizing with donor and partner funds. Great strides have been made in reporting on funds at the global level, with policy markers for reproductive, maternal and child health funding being reported for the first time by the Development Co-operation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Moreover, parliaments in 30 countries have taken legislative action to improve women and children's health, including increased budget allocations and better oversight of health budgets, with attention to these issues at the General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in March 2015.

We strongly encourage the governments to:

- Ensure infrastructure for primary health care systems for maternal and adolescent health.

- Ensure that primary health care is available in rural areas.
- Take measures for providing all sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including emergency obstetric services and skilled attendance at delivery, safe and effective contraception, services for the complications of unsafe abortion, safe abortion where such services are permitted by national law and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.
- Provide free breast cancer screening and free access to testing for and treatment of cervical cancer, especially Human Papillomavirus in young women.

Social protection

Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights and has grave physical, sexual and mental consequences for the victims. Many countries have issued laws against violence. Challenges, however, remain in implementing these laws.

We therefore strongly encourage governments to:

- Prevent any form of physical or psychological violence against women and girls (including genital mutilation, child marriage, sexual harassment) by implementing international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, especially through Recommendations 12 and 19, the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and all relevant national laws.
- Promote the UN Women and United Nations Global Compact Initiative on Women's Empowerment Principles by companies and governments as employers.
- Provide decent work and a safe workplace according to ILO's decent work agenda.
- Advocate measures to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, modern, and renewable energy services and water for all.
- Raise the awareness of women about the environment and climate change.

Political Empowerment (concerns sustainable development goals 4, 5, 8 10 16, 17)

Women are still underrepresented in parliament and government. One of the ways to increase women's representation is the introduction of quotas that would increase female representation on the political level. Women should not only be equally included in politics but also in peace and security (United Nations Security Resolution 1325).

We strongly encourage governments to:

- Provide political empowerment by equal representation of women in parliaments, leadership positions and government cabinets.
- Ensure that political parties include women candidates in equal representation.
- Establish decision-making procedures to allow women to exercise influence and take part in leadership forums.

- Include women's participation in peace processes, provide training and workshops to build capacity among women and allow women to create common advocacy platforms. International actors and mediators must advocate for the inclusion of women and support the advocacy of local actors advocating for women's inclusion.
- Address sexual and gender-based violence as well as other gender-related issues as core issues of any security strategy.
- Ensure that United Nations Member States and the United Nations take decisive action against all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by members of peace operation missions as well as by political missions. There must be a zero tolerance policy and punitive action must be taken against all personnel committing such crimes.
