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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Christian Aid, 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

About Christian Aid

Christian Aid is a Christian organisation that insists the world can and must be swiftly changed to one where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty.

We work globally for profound change that eradicates the causes of poverty, striving to achieve equality, dignity and freedom for all, regardless of faith or nationality. We are part of a wider movement for social justice, working with over 800 partners around the world, and through the global network, ACT Alliance.

Introduction

The adoption of new Sustainable Development Goals presents an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate progress towards the achievement of gender justice and the realisation of women and girls' rights. It will require all actors to move beyond "business as usual" and focus on long-term transformative change.

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

Agenda 2030 makes it clear the realisation of gender equality will contribute to progress across all the goals and targets. This agenda is not about treating women as a "vulnerable group" — rather it is about recognising that women and girls should be leading and at the forefront of Sustainable Development Goals implementation. As stated in the Rio +20 Outcome Document: "the potential of women to engage in, contribute to and benefit from sustainable development as leaders, participants and agents of change has not been fully realized".

We are conscious of the challenges ahead outlined in last year's political agreement marking Beijing +20, which reflected that progress towards the Beijing Platform for Action has been slow and uneven, that major gaps remain, and that structural barriers persist.

With that in mind, this statement focuses on three cross-cutting themes:

- transformative financing
- addressing harmful social norms
- tackling intersecting inequalities to ensure that no woman or girl is left behind

Transformative Financing

Christian Aid remains concerned by the lack of serious financial commitment from governments to achieving gender equality and sustainable development. The work which we have undertaken with the Center for Economic and Social Rights has highlighted the need for transformation in the way in which sustainable development is financed — with a focus on increasing public finance, underpinned by the human rights principles of sufficiency, equality and accountability.

Achieving gender equality and women's rights will not be cost-neutral. Work undertaken by Christian Aid partner Women's Legal Resource Centre in Malawi has highlighted the need for funding in order to fully implement legislation — in this

case, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act. Investment in other services — the training of skilled birth attendants, increasing access to family planning, improving infrastructure so that women can safely travel to and from work, all requires funding.

Given the financial challenges, women's rights activists must involve themselves in the wider macro-economic conversations about maximising resources, especially domestic resources, for development. As the 2015-16 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women report, "Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights", sets out in its chapter on the macro-economic environment, this includes conversations about global tax cooperation and a fair trading system.

Gender equality must then be central to national fiscal policy. Both revenue raising, primarily through taxation, and spending, have gendered impacts and can help reduce, or exacerbate, gender inequality. Both donors and developing countries should support the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women's Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment that aims to support the implementation of fully costed national strategies for gender equality.

Addressing harmful social norms

Gender injustice, whether manifest through gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, the burden of unpaid care-work is perpetuated by harmful social norms that go unchallenged. Without a long-term strategy to address these underlying attitudes and beliefs, the achievement of sustainable development will be impossible.

It is within this context that women's leadership must be supported and enhanced. This point is contained within target 5.5 and importantly references political, economic and public life. Currently, proposed indicators focus on political participation and drawing on our own partnership work in countries such as Sierra Leone and Bolivia, Christian Aid welcomes the possibility of measuring women's participation at the local government level, not just national parliaments. However the spirit of this target should be considered when implementing all Sustainable Development Goals — women's leadership should be nurtured and promoted whether we are thinking about education, land rights, climate change, financial decision-making or peace-building. Long-term, flexible funding, including core funding for women's rights organisations and support for women human rights defenders must be a priority. Christian Aid therefore welcomes the Dutch government decision of establishing a phase two of its Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women fund for 2016-2020. We would like to see similar instruments set up by other donors.

This should go hand in hand with efforts to work with men and boys to promote models of masculinities based on equality. Christian Aid partners in Central America, one of the most violent regions in the world, are working with young men at risk of being recruited into gangs to challenge a culture of violence based on machismo.

Christian Aid believes that there is a crucial role for people and organisations of faith, and faith leaders, in the achievement of gender justice. Down-playing this

dynamic ignores the significance of religious beliefs in many people's lives, and our strategy is therefore to support the growth of a faith movement for gender justice, bringing together existing initiatives for greater impact. We hope that governments, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empower of Women, civil society organisations and others, will recognise the importance of this and support the movement.

Sustainable development and the pledge to “leave no one behind”

The Sustainable Development Goals have been underpinned by a pledge to “leave no one behind” and “to reach the furthest behind first”. Christian Aid believes this is essential for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights — it cannot and should not replace efforts to achieve Goal 5, but it provides a greater incentive to ensure that those women and girls who are “furthest behind” will benefit from the Sustainable Development Goals and be supported into positions of leadership.

Analysis, underpinned by the provision of disaggregated data, will be required at the national and sub-national level to identify those currently being left behind. However, we would envisage that this would include:

- Rural women and girls — Maternal mortality, one of the most off-track Millennium Development Goals, continues to be disproportionately high in rural areas. Girls in rural communities continue to be at higher risk from practices such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Child, Early and Forced Marriage.
- Indigenous women and girls — Christian Aid partners in Bolivia have been working to include indigenous women in development of the Sustainable Development Goals. Indigenous females experience the highest rate of poverty in Bolivia (measured as those living below the national poverty line).
- Migrant women and domestic workers — Of the 52 million people employed as domestic workers around the world (excluding child domestic workers), around 83 per cent are women. Many experience poor working conditions and insufficient legal protection.
- Women and girls affected by HIV/AIDS — Adolescent girls and young women account for one in four new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa, and the risk of acquiring HIV is increased by violence against women and girls.
- Dalit women and girls — Christian Aid work with partners in South Asia shows that Dalit women can often fall through the gaps of policy-making, are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and continue to be trapped in inhumane occupations such as “manual scavenging” of human waste.
- Disabled women and girls — The global literacy rate is as low as three per cent for all adults with disabilities, and one per cent for women with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to experience gender-based violence compared to non-disabled women.

Many of those at risk of being left behind, are those living in countries and contexts where they are vulnerable to conflict and disasters, including climate-related disasters. Christian Aid regards the World Humanitarian Summit as an opportunity to consider women's empowerment in the context of conflict and

disasters. In particular the World Humanitarian Summit should provide a clear steer towards a more locally-owned response which must include women's rights organisations, who are already first responders, and enable them to deliver essential services for women such as sexual and reproductive health and to tackle Gender-Based Violence.
