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Statement submitted by Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres, 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

Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres is a feminist non-governmental organization from Latin America and the Caribbean that mainly focuses its actions on the education of rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women and young women.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women and young women are not guaranteed the human right to education. The barriers they face in accessing education opportunities prevent lifelong education and quality education at all levels from enabling them to have access to decent work, while policies deal only with coverage and quality for the school-age population. Tackling the right to education of women and young women involves helping to create the right conditions for them to exercise that right and providing various types of knowledge to prepare them for the world of work and citizen participation. This contributes to the development of society and, above all, to achieving peace, responsible citizenship and sustainable development.

“Leaving no one behind” is at the heart of Sustainable Development Goal 4. Its emphasis is on inclusive and equitable education. Pursuing this Goal demands the implementation of structural changes in public policies to promote equity and inclusion, while overcoming the various forms of discrimination in education as a benchmark right that is essential to the realization of all human rights. Tackling the many interrelated forms of discrimination requires the provision of education and training to ensure the full, equitable and effective participation of rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women and young women, as well as the removal of obstacles that impede their access to decent work and to decision-making at all levels and in all sectors that are relevant to them.

According to Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres, the lifelong education of women and young women is a priority within all the goals, targets and indicators of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. This perspective should include literacy that specifically targets the most vulnerable groups where low levels of reading and writing do not allow the active exercise of citizenship.

We want to underline that literacy should not be solely focused on acquiring the skills required in the labour market, but rather it should be aimed at building full citizenship — particularly for rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women. The education of women and young women is an integral part of the right to education, which is a universal right that is essential for their achievement of various socioeconomic or cultural goals and other human rights enabling them to participate in transformative changes to their countries at the local and national levels.

We must ensure the quality of lifelong education and equitable learning by the year 2030, as well as demanding equal access to quality education that includes an emphasis on the requirements of lifelong learning. With that in mind, adult women’s literacy is a priority within the education of young and adult women, so that they can access the skills and tools needed for the labour market and life in general, and can exercise full citizenship.

Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres is committed to implementing literacy processes with rural, indigenous and Afrodescendent women and young

women because we consider it to be a key element of adult education and learning. This represents a lifelong plan for learning and reaching levels of ability that enable citizens to incorporate learning throughout their lifetime and participate fully in the community, workplace and society in general. That includes the ability to read and write, identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using print and written materials, as well as the capacity to solve problems in an increasingly technological environment with a wealth of information — a skill that is needed in the changing world of work. Literacy is an essential means of strengthening people's knowledge, skills and competences for tackling the changing complexities and problems of life, culture, economy and society.

For investment in the education of young women to enable them to access lifelong opportunities for education for all, it is extremely important for countries to make commitments in the form of political will to:

- Include State funding and commitment to support literacy, non-formal education and lifelong education programmes for sustainable development, human rights and global citizenship to benefit women and young women of all ages, ethnic background and disability status from any geographical area, including peasant, indigenous and Afrodescendent women;
- Use affirmative action to improve women's access to and retention in education, for young women in particular, by creating spaces that support extracurricular activities to enable and facilitate their participation and prepare them for the labour market.
- Incorporate in all levels of formal, non-formal and informal education curricula the sociocultural references and content that address the causes of violence against women; the construction of a culture of peace and security; the dissemination of positive images of women; and the elimination of gender stereotypes as a way of challenging the acceptance of gender violence and preventing femicide/feminicide.
- Integrate sexual and reproductive rights in public education policies and include comprehensive and holistic sex education in formal education curricula.
- Integrate citizenship education activities known as community education to equip young, indigenous, peasant, and Afrodescendent women for taking an active role in solving social problems such as poverty, gender issues, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change.
- Use education actions to support women human rights defenders and feminist union leaders. Education is a human right in itself and has the ability to empower and transform lives.
- Include legislative, administrative, social, educational, employment and other measures to protect and promote the rights of all women and girls with disabilities to ensure their full and effective participation and inclusion in society and to tackle the various interrelated forms of discrimination that they face.

- Ensure that teacher-training plans and policies for all levels and forms of education include study programmes on human rights, employment rights, gender perspective, interculturalism and content to eliminate sexism, racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination and to eliminate gender stereotypes, sexism and homophobia.

Such actions require the tracking of indicators, the instruments used to measure and monitor the achievement of lifelong education activities, which must in turn be disaggregated by age, disability, geographical location, ethnicity, migration, civil status and other relevant factors. Using a gender perspective to interpret data should be a key requirement for the planning and monitoring of education programmes and activities relating to the education of women and young women. Local and national programmes should include quantitative and qualitative education indicators that include the literacy of women and young women, with a view to eliminating female illiteracy by 2030, as well as indicators on access to formal and non-formal education and lifelong learning.

One of the problems for feminist and women's organizations wishing to participate in the follow-up and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and indicators is their limited funding for involvement in those processes. In order to tackle these financial deficits, it is vital for governments to allocate specific funding to support women's organizations and feminist groups at all levels, and for this funding to be part of national budgets and official development assistance. Gender-responsive budgets must be implemented to ensure that the various needs of women and young women are properly addressed.