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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 American Association of University 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

The American Association of University Women supports the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). We also acknowledge the review of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and assert that the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without gender equality, and that countries must take decisive action to end the persistent gender gaps that remain in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in order to reach gender equality across the world by 2030.

The American Association of University Women, founded in 1881, is one of the world's pre-eminent organizations dedicated to breaking the cycle of inequality in order to expand opportunities for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. As a non-partisan, non-profit organization, the Association of University Women has over 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, more than 1,000 local branches and 800 college and university partners.

As stated in its 2019–2021 Public Policy Priorities, the American Association of University Women believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and policies that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support the civil and human rights of all immigrants, including a fair and just path to legal status. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate for implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our active participation in the Commission on the Status of Women and our commitment to ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. We support international family planning programmes that are consistent with the American Association of University Women's policy.

According to the World Economic Forum, women across the world are still a long way from achieving gender parity with men, having reached 68 per cent parity overall, leaving a gap of 32 per cent. We must act now to create a more equitable world for all women and girls, and we urge all Member States to make gender equality a priority.

The American Association of University Women “promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being are: an economy that provides equitable employment opportunities; reduction of poverty; a living wage; quality, affordable dependent care; paid family and medical leave; safe, livable, and affordable housing; quality, affordable, and accessible health care for all, including reproductive health care; and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.”

On matters of economic security, the American Association of University Women's annual research report, *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*, focuses on pay inequity, which now receives global attention. But global attention has not brought change. In the United States, women only make 82 cents on the dollar compared to men. And the numbers are dramatically worse for black women (62 cents) and Latinas (54 cents) compared to white men. These statistics have remained around the same levels for almost two decades, and based on historic rates, the gap won't close for 75 years – until 2093.

To close the gender pay gap, the American Association of University Women is working with states on pay equity laws, with employers to stop practices that perpetuate the pay gap, and training individuals to take action – from learning to advocate for their financial futures through salary negotiation training to advocating for change in their workplaces. Beyond pay equity, professions dominated by women pay less, and women and girls are more likely to be steered into lower-paying fields throughout their educations and careers. Closing the gender pay gap requires action from individuals, employers, and policymakers.

In addition to pay inequity, women are much less likely than men to be in leadership positions, although there is no lack of qualified women to fill leadership roles. In the United States, women earn the majority of university degrees at every level except for professional degrees, and more women are in the workforce today than ever before. The American Association of University Women's research report, *Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership*, found that in universities, businesses, courts, unions, and religious institutions, male leaders outnumber female leaders by wide margins. In the United States, for example, elected state representatives are far more likely to be men than women. The report also found that leadership opportunities are particularly elusive for women of color. Asian, black, and Hispanic women make up 17 per cent of workers in Standard and Poor's 500 companies but fewer than 4 per cent of executive officials and managers. The further you move up the ladder, the fewer women are there.

Having gender equality at the top benefits everyone. It is good for both men and women to shift stereotypical ideas around gender roles – just as the status quo is holding women back from leadership roles, it is holding men back from embracing caretaking and support roles. It benefits families, whether they rely on women as the sole breadwinners or share a two-earner income. It lifts up communities and supports the ability of businesses to draw on the talents and creativity of a diverse staff, and recognize the purchasing power of women. It aids nations, because the more diverse the pool, the more talented our leaders will be.

Achieving gender equality is an urgent global mandate. The American Association of University Women supports UN-Women's efforts for gender equality and advocacy to achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030, and we urge United Nations bodies and Member States to "Step It Up for Gender Equality". It is essential that Member States commit to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and take action through legislation and investment to ensure gender equality and equal opportunities and rights for every woman and every girl in every country.

The American Association of University Women urges Member States to fully support Sustainable Development Goal 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation
- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life

- 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 Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

The American Association of University Women is a champion for gender equality for women and girls in all aspects of life. It is critical that all individuals receive the support, training, human and civil rights, economic opportunity, legal, environmental, and social protections needed to achieve their career and personal aspirations. This will allow all women and girls to make increased contributions to the world in which we all live and achieve gender equality, as well as a fair and just world by 2030.
