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Statement submitted by Congregation of the Mission and Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, non-governmental organizations 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

Strengthening social protections for women experiencing homelessness

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, welcomes the focus on the review and assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly. This overarching theme allows for a celebration of achievements and recommitment to areas that require dedicated work to fulfil the demands of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development brings the issue of poverty to the forefront with Sustainable Development Goal 1 being to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty. According to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the feminization of poverty has persisted in relation to economies in transition because of political, social, and economic transformation. The persistence of socially-ascribed gender roles and women’s limited access to power, education, training, and resources only exacerbate poverty among women in both developed and developing nations.

Women experience additional barriers to resources and equitable living on the basis of, *inter alia*, their race, age, language, or indigenous status. Poverty is manifested in diverse ways. These include lack of income and productive resources for a sustainable livelihood; hunger; lack of access to education and basic services; homelessness and inadequate housing; and social discrimination and exclusion.

One manifestation of poverty, as mentioned in Article 47 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, is homelessness and inadequate housing. Women who experience homelessness are affected by the different manifestations of poverty and are incredibly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation in the streets.

Our organization wishes to address the Commission on the Status of Women on the role of stronger social protections for women who are vulnerable to homelessness and inadequate housing as a result of poverty. Women become homeless for many reasons, including weak social systems and institutions, displacement because of war and/or environmental disasters, and in search of better work in cities.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social service.” The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Indicator 11.1 states that: “By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.” The review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the venue to recommit to strengthening social protections for women to live healthy, productive lives in safe, decent, and affordable housing.

Recommendations

We call on Member States to:

- Establish an international definition of homelessness and identify and provide protections against the increased vulnerabilities that homeless women face.

- Collect disaggregated data on women experiencing homelessness, especially women-headed households in both developed and developing nations.
- Establish international social protection policies on the provision of social housing for low-income persons.
- Include women in all levels of decision-making in legal and institutional frameworks.
- Expand economic policies to lift women out of poverty with economic opportunities for equal employment and entrepreneurship.
- Establish international policies for the security of tenure for women and the right to affordable housing and property rights.

This statement is supported by Congregation of the Mission.
