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Statement submitted by Fundacion para Estudio Investigacion de la Mujer, 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

We celebrate the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women consideration of the Priority theme, Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and as review theme, Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development from the agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session.

One year from the twenty-five anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and from the irruption of the COVID19 pandemic worldwide that had undoubtedly the worst impact recently seen deepen in women's and girls from all the regions, we must reaffirm that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action continues to be a milestone and a route for the advancement of women and girls' full empowerment and full and effective participation and decision-making in all areas of work.

With the impact of COVID19, we are experiencing unquestionable setbacks and we wish to draw the attention to the dramatic situation in our region where the Latin American and Caribbean women's movement has been characterized by its capacity building, the contribution of proposals and a significant political and social advocacy.

Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased the political participation of women in the three branches of the government, improving the situation in the countries in terms of gender equality. Undoubtedly, the participation and advocacy of the feminist and women's movements in the region had (and still have) a significant impact on the extension of opportunities and guarantees of the rights for the diversity of women and girls. They were (and are) vital in the visibility and denunciation of the multiple violations of the rights that impact their lives.

But even though the participation of women in politics and access to public positions has increased over the past two decades, women who are in decision-making positions in public life as political, economic, social, and cultural issues at national, provincial, and local levels remain a minority. As in everyplace, equality continues to be an aspiration. Some advances have been encouraged by measures of a quota law in legislative power. At the global level, the region has the highest figure in 2018 on average, women participating in single or lower chambers represented the 29.8 per cent. But with dramatic gaps and disparities among the statistics in the countries, for example in the Caribbean, the average number is only 19.5 per cent. At regional level, the average number of women in legislative power sits at 29.6 per cent. Moreover, the increase in the number of women included is not homogenous; some of the most vulnerable groups of women, such as indigenous and Afro-descendent, remain under-represented.

Many countries increased women's participation in politics through quota laws, the experience was that there are laws, the average in general of 30 -33 per cent establish by the laws was not easily reached due to the resistance of political parties to place women in the lists in places to be able to be elected. In Argentina the quota law (Law 24.012) was passed in 1991 but in the regulation decree it was necessary to specify according to the number of candidates how the order of women in the lists to have the correct proportion will be. This was difficult in elections for the Senate because as they were only two candidates for each province, women were always postponed. In 2001 when it was the preparations for the election, as this year was the first with three senators elected by province as they combine two from the majority and one from the minority, a regulation decree was signed to determine that each list must have one women among the two candidates. For the first time after this election the women's senator average number was the highest for the Senate.

For some years now, parity laws have been incorporated in some countries such as Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. In Argentina it was incorporated in 2017 (Law 27.412) to be applied in the next election. Despite all this, this law has not fully implemented in countries; Argentina was unable to reach 50 per cent parity only achieving approximately 40 per cent.

The average female participation in the highest courts of justice in 2018 in the region was 32.1 per cent. Although, in several countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guyana, Paraguay, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, there were no female members representative in their highest courts of justice. For the first time in 2003 in Argentina, a woman was elected into the Supreme Court. And, later with the decision to have 7 members - as opposed to five - the number rose to two women. However, with the passing away of one, this position has yet to be replaced with another woman leaving only one woman representative at present.

Since 2002, in Argentina we have a trade union's quota law for female participation in decision-making. But almost two decades after its sanction, the trade union quota has become insufficient as a form of incorporation of a feminist policy that breaks with the masculine hegemony in trade unions.

According to research by the Inter-American Development Bank, this is also observed in trade unions, private companies, and media at the regional level. In micro-finance institutions in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, women represent 53 per cent of employees; however, on average, only 31 per cent women occupy influential positions in boards and just 18 per cent of the presidencies of those boards. In Argentina, the proportion is low. The level of participation is even lower in other sectors of the economy.

But how can we empower women and girls if they live under the poverty line, even more in the context of COVID19? The achievements in the reduction of poverty and inequality registered in the region have reversed with the COVID19 pandemic. Poverty was the main problem area across the region, the region was the second with the lowest performance in terms of the proportion of the population living under the poverty line before COVID19 and statistics says that this has been deeper. Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico were countries that show the worst rates in 2019. And, taking into account the capacity of women to buy the food for their families, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Jamaica, are the countries with the worst status in 2019. Brazil's poverty and hunger had improved with the Bolsa Familia policy' but during the last two years the government ended that and rapidly reversed this advance resulting in deepening poverty. In Argentina presently, with the increasing rate of poverty since 2018, 60 per cent of children and approximately 50 per cent of women live under the line of poverty with more than 20 per cent living in extreme poverty according to official data from the National Statistics and Census Institute from Argentina. And, estimations are that poverty will worsen as the pandemic continues.

So, we claim governments and United Nations agencies to strengthen the presence of women in decision making processes as a way to improve the lives of all persons, particularly that of children and women worldwide.