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Statement submitted by Human Rights Sanrakshan Sansthaa, 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

Despite the undertakings made, women continue to be under-represented in the political and economic decision-making process, both in the individual Council of Europe member states and in international organisations. And yet, balanced participation of men and women in decision-making is a precondition for the improved functioning of democracy and society and is part of the overall sharing of responsibilities between women and men. Girls and women have a right to engage in civil society, vote in elections, be elected to government office, serve on boards, and make their voices heard in any process that will ultimately affect them, their families, and their communities. Balanced participation by women and men in decision-making is a precondition for improving the functioning of democracy and society, as are respect for women's rights, their financial autonomy and their education, in a context of shared responsibilities between women and men. Ongoing under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making reflects a basic democratic deficit in both the member states of the Council of Europe and the broader international context.

When women are elected to political positions, they can make a difference for girls and women and strongly impact legislation. Additionally, women tend to push for positive change around health, community wellbeing, poverty reduction, and family welfare, and are more likely to strive to reach a consensus on policies.

Positions of political power must be accessible to all women, and not restrictive based on age, education, socioeconomic status, geographical origin, or any other demographic characteristic.

Any nation that fails to educate its girls or employ its women and allow them to maximise their potential is doomed to fall behind in the global economy.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life.

There has been progress towards the equal representation of men and women in decision-making in the past ten years.

The empowerment of women by their increased participation in all aspects of political, social and economic life has become one of the major goals of democratic and participatory movements, as well as women's organizations, throughout the world.

Women bring different qualities, values and priorities to the political arena, and thereby make policymaking processes: An increase in female leadership also benefits men, and male politicians in particular. Increasing gender parity in political parties attracts more female votes and party membership. It also roots the party more deeply into their constituencies through female candidates' NGO and CSO ties. more holistic and effective.

Mixed gender approaches can be more effective at changing the system. By connecting men and women on gender equality and sharing perspectives, men's attitudes and relations with their female colleagues might change.

Every day, millions of women and girls worldwide experience violence. This abuse takes many forms, including intimate physical and sexual partner violence, female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage, sex trafficking, and rape.

Violence against women and children is a serious public health concern, with costs at multiple levels of society. Although violence is a threat to everyone, women and children are particularly susceptible to victimization because they often have fewer rights or lack appropriate means of protection. In some societies certain types of violence are deemed socially or legally acceptable, thereby contributing further to the risk to women and children.

Violence against women and girls is considered one of the most pervasive human rights abuses of our times, affecting more than one in three women globally.

However, rates and patterns of violence vary significantly across settings and across the life-cycle, showing that violence against women and girls is not inevitable. Particular groups of women and girls may be more vulnerable to violence and exposed to multiple forms of violence due to compounded forms of discrimination and socio-economic exclusion.

Violence against women and girls also adversely affects a country's human, social and economic development, and is a fundamental barrier to eradicating poverty and building peace.

The issue of violence against women and girls is now firmly placed on the international development agenda after decades of work by the women's movement, researchers and practitioners. This is reflected in the high-level global commitments to addressing violence against women and girls, such as the 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women which focused on prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, the Global Summit on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Girl Summit on female genital mutilation (FGM) and child early forced marriage (CEFM), the Call to Action to protect women and girls in emergencies, and the recent inclusion of three specific targets to address violence against women and children in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, many national governments have passed laws to prevent violence against women, developed national action plans, and undertaken efforts to improve the health and justice sector responses to violence.

Violence against women and girls is not of conflict and by combatants only. The most reported forms of violence (child marriages, physical and sexual assault by known perpetrators, polygamy, and the denial of resources and opportunities) all have adverse impacts on survivors' reproductive health and on their ability to secure their livelihoods. Widespread discrimination against women also exacerbates institutional obstacles that prevent women from accessing the same opportunities as men and from exercising decision-making powers on an equal footing.
