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Statement submitted by World Federation of Trade Unions, 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 World Federation of Trade Union, which represents more than 97 million workers in 130 countries all over the world, is hereby submitting positions and recommendations for the promotion and solution of contemporary issues facing by women worldwide. Our analysis is in line with the main focus of the 64th session of Commission on the Status of Women which is on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the [23rd special session of the General Assembly](#).

The World Trade Union Federation is hereby continuing its timeless contribution to the works of the Commission on the Status of Women in the framework of its General consultative status in the United Nations since 1946. Our analysis sets out our view on the contemporary needs and rights of women in comparison with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The positions that are going to be analyzed in the following paragraphs constitute a concise codification of the collective positions of the World Trade Union Federation as adopted in resolutions and decisions of global and regional congresses, conferences, workshops, and other initiatives which have took place recently with the participation of trade unionists representing millions of workers from every region of the world.

In our understanding the majority of women s facing double exploitation based on one hand and foremost on its social position and role in the productive process (which is the same position of the majority of men also). On the other hand, the second cause of the exploitation of women is gender discrimination and gender inequalities. The problems of the women are not limited in the inequalities in the work, wages, opportunities, education but are also expanding to all problems, barriers and exploitation that are faced by the workers and popular strata as a whole in work, wages, opportunities and education regardless their gender, biological differences or other differences. Therefore, the problems that contemporary women are facing and need to be eliminated are not only those arising from gender and are listed in the 5th goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) but are also all matters of the whole 17 goals (poverty, starvation, unemployment, health, wars, climate impacts, exclusion from education and technologies) and more other.

In addition, the particular measures and objectives aiming to the reducing of the gender inequalities and the overall social exploitation experienced by women have an important but limited perspective. The World Federation of Trade Unions puts forward specific proposals and measures and prepares several actions to reduce the social gap and eliminate the impact of dual exploitation of women. However, the definitive and meaningful liberation of women can only result from a total change in the whole social reality and all its forms and permutations, including its structure and relations of production.

The three dimensions of sustainable development as defined by the UN: economic, social and environmental, as far as we are concerned, are interconnected and cannot be addressed or achieved if we approach them separately and statically and above all, they could not be approached and addressed independently from the frame productive model of contemporary society. This approach will not be explained further as it has been extensively analyzed in our recent multi-page issue “The Present & Future of Work” (2019).

In the present text, due to the limited length of the text and for targeting reasons we focus on the following specific issues:

The World Trade Union Federation, noting the relative improvement and reduction of the income gap between men and women, is concerned about the large gender pay gap for equal work that is still existing. Various international surveys report that women earn around 77 per cent of men's salaries for equal jobs. This reveals the need for intensification of measures and escalation of the mobilization of workers and both friends against this distinction. In many cases, the absence of an official database helps the underpayment of the women. The elimination of the income gap is a fundamental issue which is reported, inter alia, as goal 5.1 and 8.5 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as in paragraph F (Women and the economy) of Chapter IV of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and was adopted in the resolution of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly. For the uncovering on this issue, the United Nations in cooperation with the Member States should set up a database on the disclosure and revelation of income inequalities in every country and occupation and develop specific legal acts for the banning of the pay gap. We call upon all workers, men and women, to continue and increase their struggle for the common and equal improvement of their working terms and conditions.

The percentages of unemployment among the genders prevailed one of the most tough aspects of gender inequality. The women participation is 49.6 per cent of the global women population and at the same time the men participation in work is 76 per cent of the global men population. The women unemployment creates negative chain effects linked with all aspects of an individual and expend gender inequality. The increased rates of women unemployment exacerbate household financial distress and create conditions of social marginalization and pressure to women to accept lower wages. The goal of the Commission on the Status of Women should be the establishment of programs to eliminate women's unemployment and to ensure equal employment. The said issue is reported to chapter II and to paragraph F (Women and the economy) of Chapter IV of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and was adopted in the resolution of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly.

According to the point FI/165/C of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which adopted as a commitment by the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly Resolution: A key problem that contributes to both low employment rates and increased dismissals of women, it's maternity. It is estimated that 60 per cent of working women have no legal right to motherhood and 65.9 per cent of women do not receive remuneration during maternity leave. Many employers either target systematic layoffs of pregnant workers or terrorize them not to get pregnant in order to keep their job. The World Federation of Trade Unions requires adequate maternity leave with full remuneration during the leave. We also demand the creation of the preconditions and state subsidy for childcare at stations with appropriate facilities and skilled staff for a reasonable period after the end of parental leave.

The barriers that women face in education at all levels are reflected in their under-representation at every level from basic education to scientific research and academic careers. The related data on gender inequality at both the lowest and most advanced levels of education are indicative since 2 out of 3 of the 781 million illiterates under the age of 15 globally are women and only 30 per cent of the scientific researchers are women. According to goal 4 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and paragraph B (Education and training of women) of Chapter IV of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and was adopted in the resolution of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly: the World Federation of Trade Unions requires universal and free primary and secondary education for every child and public programs for the elimination of gender inequality in higher education and scientific and academic occupation.

The World Federation of Trade Unions struggles for the quality upgrade of women's involvement at all levels and aspects of social life, being focused on attracting and encouraging more women to participate in trade unions and collective organized struggle. Undoubtedly, by reducing the barriers and constraints faced by women, the improving of the proportional representation of women in decision-making centers and positions of power will be a normal consequence. However we do not agree in the manner this issue is raised in goal 5.5 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and paragraph G (Women in power and decision-making) of Chapter IV of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which was also adopted in the resolution of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly. The issue, as it is raised, does not focus on removing the restrictions that result in the under-representation of women in decision-making centers, but rather aims to ensure the equal participation of women in all centers of power. As far as we are concerned, gender and the particular characteristics of a policy-maker do not play a primary role. The main issue is if the essence and direction of implemented policies serve the interests of popular strata and workers. Modern world history boasts examples of women or individuals from a minority group who have implemented anti-labor policies affecting women and their respective minority groups. The promotion of female policymaker idols regardless of the direction of the policy they pursued not only does not promote the liberation of women but blurs the goal of active and effective participation in all aspects and levels of social and political life.

According to the goals 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and paragraph D,E,I and L of Chapter IV of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which was also adopted in the resolution of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly, the World Federation of Trade Unions condemns all forms of exploitation, violence, coercion and discrimination against women. It strongly condemns the unacceptable phenomenon of coercion in marriage and sexual harassment under any circumstances and especially against underage girls. At the same time, we are strengthening the struggle for respect for and implementation of human rights and the end of wars and wars' crimes that harm women and the people as a whole.

The World Federation of Trade Unions underlines that the general goal set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for realizing the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the commitment "no one will be left behind" " are both far from the prevailing reality of a society that is mired in inequality and exploitation.

The World Federation of Trade Unions is committed that will continue to contribute through its general consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council in the path it has paved since 1946 for the elimination of all inequalities and discriminations against women. But above all, it is committed to escalating its historic mission of organizing trade union struggles of workers around the world for the satisfaction of their contemporary needs and the removing of all forms of discrimination and exploitation in society.
