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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 Sveriges Kvinnolobby, 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

Women's full participation in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development, and peace. Still, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making bodies around the world, including in Sweden.

The Swedish Women's Lobby call on Member States at the 65th session of CSW to deliver on their CEDAW based commitments and to work actively for an equal distribution of power and influence between women and men on local, regional, national and international levels in both public and private sectors.

Only when the responsibility of unpaid care and housework is equally shared by women and men, women can take part and excel in their careers on equal terms. Therefore, Member States must put in place equal, non-transferable, and fully paid parental leave schemes. Furthermore, Member States need to ensure that round the clock, publicly financed, high quality childcare, elderly care, and care for persons with disabilities is accessible in all urban and rural areas.

We also call on Member States and on the European Union to introduce mandatory quotas for company boards and to implement measures that enable more women to candidate. States should encourage political parties to introduce rules that require every second candidate on voting lists to be a woman, a system that has been practised by most political parties in Sweden on a voluntary basis for more than 20 years.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging reports from the women's shelter movement and others at the front lines have shown that violence against women and girls has intensified. Women's organizations around the world report increasing violence in its many forms: violence from husbands and other family members, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriages, increased sexual violence and harassment of girls online. States must take further action to protect women from all forms of violence and hold perpetrators accountable. The time has come for the impunity that always has accompanied men's violence against women to end.

Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are facing a global pushback, not only from conservative and fundamentalist groups, but also from a neoliberal ideology and an increased marketisation of women's bodies. The buying and selling of women in prostitution, pornography and surrogacy are one of the biggest threats to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, yet they are rarely addressed in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) policies. All policies and legislative measures aiming to protect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and to combat violence against women must include measures to abolish systems of trade in women for sexual and reproductive services.

Lastly, the Swedish Women's Lobby welcome the review theme of Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. As women's empowerment and gender equality is a precondition to sustainable development, we call on Member States to implement a gender equality perspective and gender sensitive indicators in all policies and actions on economic, social and environmental development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable women's basic rights are. In rich countries and in countries with economical restraints. An already slow progress has come to a full stop in crucial areas and in some cases even receded. Women's poverty has increased, access to schooling for girls has decreased, gaps between rich and poor has increased where women form the majority of the poorest. In many ways the pandemic has shown the need for stronger welfare systems and greater equality.

The women's movement is and has always been the guarantee for not forgetting the promises given and commitments made towards half of humanity. In the last years, women's organizations have seen decreasing funding, shrinking spaces and the harassment of women's human rights advocates. In every country Member States must ensure women's opportunities to organize and express our demands and experiences, as they are the structural prerequisites to fulfil the CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action.
