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peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Udisha, 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

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs in India.

Most of the countries have laws in place to ensure gender equality. However, due to reasons such as customs, religion and social norms the enforcement of the laws is very poor. With the frequent challenges posed by climate change and other related outcomes like poverty and depletion of resources, the gender equality commitment usually takes a back seat.

There is a visible difference between the developed and under developed countries when it comes to the seriousness of providing level playing field to the women and girls. It is all about priority and not the noble intentions as it is obvious in all the patriarchal society where the males go out of the house to work and women take care of the home. As gender equality is not limited to the nature of work, the male members of the family and neighborhood are responsible to ensure that the women of the family do not feel left out and they are provided with opportunities in education and jobs as well.

Here the role of the governments becomes important. Merely bringing the laws may not achieve the goal, as the society needs to be sensitized about the long-term benefits of empowering women. There are so many role models across the world whose works can be translated into a model and other nations, particularly the developing nations may take few leaves from them.

.A basic reason why we have not yet achieved gender equality in every sphere is that women and girls' voice is often not heard in global and national decision-making. The majority of girls in India don't have access to using basic technology such as phones and computers because of infrastructure related challenge and financial constraints. There has been lot of progress in ensuring access to education but the same has been slow in improving the gender sensitivity of the education system. We need to give girls more and more images and role models that expand their dreams. For example, when mothers are educated and empowered to make choices in their lives, they encourage their daughters to go to school as well. If we want girls to be able to complete education we have to end child marriage and female feticides. The Government of India has launched a program – “ Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” meaning – “Save Girl Child, Educate Girl Child” but there are gaps in implementation of the program.

Another fact that we need to keep in mind is that when women fill in the gaps left by men, it often has an effect. In education and the workplace, girls/ women face sexual harassment, shame and violence. We also have to sincerely address sexual harassment of girls to ensure their mental health and provide them free atmosphere to get education and training. This problem is compounded when jobs and resources become scarce. This can end or at least reduce by the intervention of appropriate legislation and its proper implementation by all stakeholders.

The household chores, women and girls do at home; provide the foundation for the economy. In fact, there is a growing consensus to declare the Housewives (a term used for those women, who are not employed but perform only domestic chores and look after their husbands and children) as self-employed and decide their remuneration. At present, the women are not paid but carry immeasurable responsibilities for domestic work and care of family. Supporting women in non-traditional jobs is crucial in not only making long lasting change in their lives but also help break social taboos. A proven way to overcome general barriers to a

woman's success is participation by women in neighborhood, provincial and national legislature and executive as empowered change agents.

In India, even in the beginning of the present era, many families continued to use traditional cooking fuels, namely, crop waste, firewood, cow-dung cake, and charcoal. Due to Household Air Pollution, continuous use of these fuels badly influences the health of women and her families, thereby causing lung and heart illnesses. The use of conventional fuels hampers the socio-economic status of women in addition to its economic outcome and compact incomes for the family as women spend most of the time in a day in collecting the fuel.

Nearly one million deaths annually are estimated in India due to household air pollution. Therefore, it becomes essential to address the access problems by initiating a new start to encourage Liquified Petroleum Gas as a clean environmentally fuel by subsidizing the amount of a new connection for a household, especially those who come under Below Poverty Line Adoption and use of Liquified Petroleum Gas has also helped such families in addressing various issues to rural households, namely, the issue of household air pollution, improving the socio-economic status of women.

Therefore, the Government has taken an initiative by launching Prime Minister Ujjwala Scheme which aims to provide a clean energy fuel of Liquified Petroleum Gas to 80 million rural women in India who belong below the poverty line family. The objectives of Scheme are to provide sustainability, energy affordability, efficiency, safety, and clean environment. The socio-economic factors of women empowerment involved in this Scheme are accessibility, executive power, awareness, financial independence and behavioral change in women. The Scheme has acted as one of the most extraordinary change agents concerning to the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

Despite some progress made, there are still significant gender gaps across the country and are taking on a variety of forms such as physical violence and lack of common employment or political opportunities. Sadly, the risk of becoming a victim of violence increases during times of crisis, such as the outbreak of COVID-19. If Covid-19's critical situation is considered as a short-term impact on this issue, it is climate change that will result in a further decline in the commitment to work for women to achieve gender equality. Therefore, programs aimed at long-term outcomes must take place to ensure success.

Gender inequality is also reflected in the economic life of the women and girls. Women are less likely to participate in labor markets than men and are less likely to be employed. These gaps of opportunity indicate that the catastrophic effects of climate change may negatively affect women. Women make up a larger share of health and social workers around the world. Those who are in care giving roles may face increasing responsibility after school closures, where working mothers find themselves more likely than usual in trying to do homework, home school, child care and household chores. Though, Indian labor laws do not discriminate on the basis of gender but strict enforcement of labor laws in the private sector is still a distant dream.

We look forward to the many unknown and silent women idols around the world that have and still care for the growing number of sick people and helping those at risk affected by the current epidemic. Thus, the history of the world is filled with a visible role that does not require women in each crisis period even if man is made by nature. In fact all issues and crisis present an opportunity to improve gender equality that too without any additional responsibilities.

Sadly, we are likely to see some setbacks in gender equality during pandemic like situations. The European Institute of Gender Equality has stated that the closure

or near-closure of businesses could have a severe effect on women-dominated professions (such as flight attendants, hairdressers, and tour operators), and unpaid care work will continue to increase.

Historically, many women have developed a way of seeing themselves for the benefit of our society. Some are famous, others are less famous, but each has contributed to the advancement of humanity, whether promoting human rights and peace, advancing science, or working on the front line to save lives and protect public health.

Climate change and related problems will put unprecedented pressure on governments, development agencies, and communities. While striving to respond urgently, we must not lose sight of our goal of achieving gender equality. Instead, we should make it a part of our efforts to address these unprecedented challenges and become stronger.
