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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

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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

Leave No One Behind

‘Leave no one behind’ is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals. However, the current climate crisis together with growing inequality and poverty all too often hit women that much harder. It is clear that gender imbalances influence the impact of disasters.

The systemic global issue of gender inequality has been highlighted in international agreements, from the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, among others. In 2010, the 16th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decided on a ‘shared vision’ for climate action recognizing that gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for climate action in all aspects of climate change. A decade on, stronger climate policies and lower Green House Gas emissions have been found where women have greater representation in national parliaments. To emphasize more strongly the need for the participation of women, within the Paris Agreement of 2015, Parties were encouraged that when taking action to address climate change, they should respect, promote, and consider their respective obligations on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Besides the valid reasons of justice and equity supporting the case for women’s presence and leadership in all places where decisions on climate change are taken, to ensure that policies, plans and programs account for the specific needs of women and girls, it is important to understand which capacities are needed to generate the deep and enduring changes that are called for. There is increasing ‘climate anxiety’ especially among young people who see an unstoppable climate crisis.

It is as if the compass of the direction of humanity has lost its bearing. This is because as individuals we have become misaligned with our common core principles which are innate to every human being. This inner awareness goes beyond position and power and even gender; it is our inner spiritual identity which gives us meaning and purpose in life. This awareness defines our attitude towards the self and others; we feel more secure in knowing that we have inner strength independent of external pressures to conform. Our vision becomes one which sees with equality and togetherness, rather than with fear and divisiveness. We then act with noble intentions, according to our vision. Finally, our actions create our world. The solution to gender imbalance, to empowering women and men to play their role equally in environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and programs, must surely begin with this change of awareness.

Our inner spiritual awareness enables us to experience the innate qualities of our being. It is an innate wisdom that seeks to protect life, sustain future generations, and is collaborative and inclusive. It is not gender specific but allows a mutual respect and understanding that enables all to flourish. An awareness of our inner original state of peace and our capacity to love altruistically brings about an attitude and vision that works for the good of all. There are several ways in which this manifests.

An Integrated and Holistic Approach

Transdisciplinary research acknowledges that responding to complex issues requires drawing from and connecting together ideas and experience from a range of disciplines and perspectives. This prevents us from working in silos and allows the recognition of the impact decisions have on the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities. It is an approach that puts people first. To bring about

lasting change, it is important that individuals are able to find meaning and fulfilment in their everyday lives. It is an attitude and vision that leads to actions that are motivated by the welfare, nurture and care of others. This leads to a holistic approach to rebuilding society and solving challenges. With these core values at the heart of decision making, a society can flourish.

Generosity of Spirit

Generosity of spirit comes from the vision that we are part of one human family and so considers the greater good of all, rather than short term gain for an individual or an exclusive group of people. It is the recognition that either we flourish or we perish together. Losing sight of this has caused the extreme and extensive consumption of natural resources which is destroying our eco-systems. Generosity can restore our respectful connection with the Earth and enable greater climate justice, such as the sharing of scarce resources. As Christiana Figueres says in her book, *The Future we Choose*: “When considering an action, we have to ask: does it actively contribute to humans and nature thriving together as one integrated system on this planet? If yes, green light. If not, red light, period.”

Compassion

Compassion is an innate human quality to feel for others and to take action to assist them. There is a very close connection between compassion and climate change. It moves away from the concept of the conquest of nature by the realization that we need to respect, safeguard and cherish the planetary life of which we are a part. Compassion can motivate us for change. Rather than founding our actions on a spirit of competitive and aggressive individuality, as part of the spiritual trajectory it is based on an attitude of true appreciation of the effects of all our actions and our way of life, on others and on nature.

Following the Voice of our Conscience

In terms of climate change, humanity has consistently ignored the voice of conscience. Although this voice has been urging us to maintain our dignity and treat nature with respect, we have not been able to listen. With a numb conscience we continue to destroy our own home, including the planet’s ecology. No other species does this. Now we can re-examine our choices and decide on a different direction using an active conscience, rather than from a personal selfish space. An awakened conscience will see, understand and decide what we would like to do, and also have the innate power to break any habitual patterns that bind us to the past or block transformation. So often we understand what we need to do, yet we lack the willpower to implement powerful, elevated, noble thoughts and feelings that come to light. Sometimes, this may mean going against current public opinion. As we well know, the minority leads at moments of transformation, while gradually the majority will come to understand the changes that are necessary.

Empowering Women

Women have often played a key role in sustainability. As far back as 1962, Rachel Carson warned us of the serious harm being done to the environment by humanity in her book *Silent Spring*, which went on to have an enormous impact. Gro Harlem Brundtland convened the 1972 first Earth Summit in Stockholm, and later went on to lead the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). She coined the term ‘sustainability’ and defined it to stand for caring for this and future generations. Kenyan social, environmental, and political activist Wangari Maathai, was awarded the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, and the Costa Rican diplomat, Christiana Figueres, led

the negotiations that culminated in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Women's voices are important and meaningful.

There has never been a more pressing need for women to play an equal part in the climate change agenda, especially during this post-Covid recovery period. For women and girls to be empowered requires, from the early years, a nurturing of self-awareness and a vision of equal value for the lives of all, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, culture or race. Educational systems that nurture this are essential to bring about a shift in deeply entrenched attitudes of gender bias. By engaging women and girls in decision making there is a greater likelihood of finding a way to address the prevalent inequities in our society which will then benefit the whole community. Women and Girls are a key part of the solution.

It is our belief that if we shift our awareness to awaken our innate qualities, we will be able to work with an attitude and vision of equality which will drive behavioral change. The principles which are innate to the human spirit will ignite the will and the power to act from an awakened active conscience. Women play a pivotal role in encouraging behavioral and life-style changes which are so needed to address climate issues and make the global shift to a more sustainable world.
