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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 International Longevity Center Global Alliance, Ltd., 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 International Longevity Centre Global Alliance (ILC Global Alliance) submits statement to 66th Session of the Commission of Status of Women for consideration on Priority theme: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes; and Review theme: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work (agreed conclusions of the sixty first session).

ILC Global Alliance, an international consortium of organizations from 16 countries help societies address longevity and population ageing in positive and productive ways, using life course approach and highlighting older people's active participation and contributions to family and society. It promotes gender equality by: 1) ensuring gender is mainstreamed in ageing policies, and ageing is mainstreamed in gender policies; 2) protecting human rights of older women, and 3) improving data on their intersectionality.

Building on Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, goal of gender equality and principle of gender mainstreaming in ageing society was integrated in Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). Despite significant policy progress, gaps between men and women remain and continue to impact older women.

Older women's vulnerabilities and contributions to climate change

Older persons are disproportionately affected in emergency situations (see [A/HRC/42/43](#)). Factors that worsen impact of climate change and adversely affect their rights are "ageism and age discrimination, social isolation, neglect, poverty, migration status and disability" ([A/HRC/47/46](#)). Yet, older persons are excluded from this debate. Compounded by wrong perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices, "older persons do not have specific instrument guaranteeing their human rights and are often not mentioned in international environmental agreements". (Ibid)

The ILC Global Alliance believes specific risks and impacts of climate change to older women are invisible and neglected. We commend and support recent undertakings to address: (1) Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' ([A/HRC/47/46](#)) examined human rights impact of climate change on older persons; and (2) Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights of older persons: intersection of ageing and gender ([A/76/157](#)) in conflict and emergency situations.

The report specifies vulnerabilities of older women to climate change:

- (1) Physiological and physical differences, social norms and roles, gender discrimination and inequities in access to resources and power
- (2) Their higher rates of poverty aggravated by climate change; disproportionate health risks; higher rates of mortality and other complications from extreme heat events.
- (3) In emergencies, they are more at risk-of being viewed as burden and of violence, abuse and neglect.
- (4) In humanitarian, they depend on others to fulfil basic needs. Limited literacy and gendered expectations make it difficult to access information, assistance, and services, apply for documents and participate in community activities.

In spite of this, older women are important change agents in climate action. [A/HRC/47/46](#) highlights benefits of climate action by older persons.

As the sixty-sixth session of Commission on the Status of Women begins, it is critical governments acknowledge factors that increase older women's risk to negative impact of climate change accumulated throughout, magnified by ageist stereotypes and discrimination. Therefore, greater focus on intersection of gender, ageing, disability and climate change, ensuring human rights of older women are fully respected and protected in response and recovery strategies, eliminating ageism to maximise access and participation in climate change action.

The ILC Global Alliance supports recommendations in [A/76/157](#) and [A/HRC/47/46](#):

- Strengthen international legal system and action for protection of older persons;
- Take urgent, meaningful and ambitious action to mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- Enable and support older persons' participation in climate action.

Older women's economic empowerment

The ILC Global Alliance acknowledges the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent declarations as they advance economic empowerment of girls and women of all ages. Older women are vulnerable in many situations due to multiple discrimination. Their human rights 'are also being profoundly neglected by policymakers and human rights community.' ([A/HRC/44/36](#)). This despite that 'older women do contribute to our societies in multiple roles, as workers, carers, volunteers, advisors and leaders.' ([A/HRC/44/36](#)).

Older women are economically active, particularly in low and middle-income countries. They continue to do significant paid and unpaid work due to "economic necessity and caregiving expectations, and to avoid dependency and remain active and connected". ([A/76/157](#)) The International Labour Organisation (ILO) notes that at global level, 13.2 per cent of women over age 65 participated in the labour force compared with 28.2 per cent of men in 2019. In low-income countries, this increased to 33.4 per cent of women and 56.4 per cent of men. Working in older age has advantages and disadvantages. While work can increase the financial independence and provide sense of fulfilment and status within households, it can also negatively impact physical and mental health of older women due to poor working conditions. ([A/76/157](#)).

'The High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that almost a quarter of women over the age of 60 were working, many in farming and informal sector. In sub-Saharan Africa, as many as 42 per cent of women aged over 65 are in labour force. Further, many older women were engaged in unpaid domestic and care work, involving childcare and care of older persons. While these jobs were not being accounted for in formal economy, many societies would barely function without them.' ([A/HRC/44/36](#))

The ILC Global Alliance believes older women's economic empowerment remains an aspiration despite inclusion of concerns in strategic objective and actions of sixty-first session of Commission on Women (CN.6/2017/L.5). Over past decade, United Nations human rights mechanisms and other bodies have increasingly addressed rights of older persons and recently paid attention to intersection of ageing and gender. The recent report on Human Rights of Older Women: the intersection of ageing and gender ([A/76/157](#)) outlines the inequalities and discrimination, particularly in income security, social protection and property rights:

- Older age aggravates gender-based discrimination and inequality in labour market.
- Discrimination in hiring is often reported, with older women being perceived as less capable and active.
- Older women tend to work in part-time, precarious and informal jobs, particularly affected during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Older women are more likely to provide care to partners, grandchildren and relatives and reduce/quit employment before retirement age.
- One in three people above retirement age does not receive a pension, with significant disparities across regions and countries. Women represent 65 per cent without any regular pension.
- Lower pensions for women are often result of cumulative disadvantages- lower labour force participation, gender pay gap, interrupted employment patterns due to caregiving, and part-time, precarious and informal work, exacerbated by policies reinforcing link between contributions and benefits.
- Ability to acquire and control assets, including land, affects women's wealth accumulation and standard of living.
- Even when statutory laws recognise inheritance rights, older widows can be excluded due to customary rules, social and cultural norms and lack of awareness about legal rights.

With its disproportionate effect on older women, COVID 19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities. World Economic Forum (2021) estimated impact of pandemic increased gender gap by a generation.

We urge Member States, in agreeance with Agreed Conclusions of Commission on Status of Women to strengthen protection of human rights of older women in economic sphere, including elimination of gender-based discrimination. We also support recommendations by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([A/HRC/44/36](#)) and Independent Expert on enjoyment of human rights of older persons to ensure older women exercise their human rights and live with dignity:

- Fulfil obligations to eliminate discrimination against women and to respect, protect and fulfil their human rights, by addressing multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination.
- Systematically collect and disaggregate data by age, gender and other variables that captures lived realities across thematic areas and include them in surveys.
- Adopt measures to mitigate gendered education and skills gaps, including digital literacy and programmes to update skills to access labour market.
- Initiate gender-responsive pension reforms, i.e. non-contributory and universal schemes, repealing discriminatory provisions and practices, introducing adequate contribution credits and adjusting benefit levels.
- Remove discriminatory property, inheritance laws and customary practices that disadvantage.
- Identify and integrate specific needs and vulnerabilities in planning, response and recovery stages of emergency and humanitarian actions and in climate change and disaster risk reduction; and ensure responses to the COVID-19 pandemic analyse the differentiated impacts.
- Support legally binding international instrument protecting rights of older persons.