Economic and Social Council

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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 Slum Child Foundation, 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.

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

According to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, it is clear that many forms of violence happen to women, especially in the digital era where discrimination goes unreported. This includes access to digital information, educational, social and economic use, gender gaps, cultural beliefs, and stereotyping are stumbling blocks against the digital realization of women's rights in the current century.

However, the gender disparity in digital participation is yet to be bridged in the current century, especially within rural and informal settlements. The Maputo Declaration indicates a provision for comprehensive women's rights in Africa. However, the digitalization of women's rights remains a dream. This dream can be achieved through the periodic review of women's rights instruments.

The collaboration between the civil society and Kenya's state party has enhanced the adoption and access to digital infrastructure towards the promotion of women's rights in the digital era, and towards the delivery of the same. However, much more needs to be done.

With support from various stakeholders, including World University Service, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and Government line ministries, Slum Child Foundation has been working with young mothers within the informal settlements to improve digital literacy in thematic areas such as education, finance, and e-commerce. From our engagement with these women, it is clear that come 2030, we will not be able to have an all-inclusive world because most of the women from the rural and informal settlements have never received political goodwill.

The biggest losers are young women and teen mothers who have no access to digital education after dropping out of school. Young women often drop out of school due to early pregnancies and mental health issues (including drug and substance abuse).

Education

According to a 2021 study by Dalberg and Omidyar Network only "35 per cent of women are advanced digital services users, compared to 54 per cent of men". The gender gap is wider within the education sector, with only a few women graduating with degrees in information and communications technology-related fields. The result? Fewer women are eligible for careers within the digital space. Within the informal settlement, fewer women have access to digital education due to poor digital literacy and inadequate infrastructure (schools, mobile, and computer devices). The educational gap among women is often a result of harmful social norms, social and economic inequalities, and a lack of motivation.

The Kenyan government has implemented initiatives aimed at repackaging and encouraging the adoption of science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related courses by girls and young women. The most recent initiative is the Google-sponsored initiative intended to introduce pilot coding projects to several primary schools. Sadly, these initiatives fail to identify and mitigate existing gender disparities.

The digital education gap results in a persistent gender bias in emerging professions such as cloud computing, data and artificial intelligence. Given that over 90 per cent of today's jobs involve a digital component, including information and communications technology in the education sector will better prepare our girls for the job market. These digital skills will also give them an upper hand in economies where routine work has been automated.

Slum Child Foundation recommends the implementation of initiatives that give young girls and teen mums access to digital training, work opportunities and education. There are several models by state parties and civil societies, that are proven to be very effective towards realizing the dream of making young women from the slums become agents of the digital world of unlimited opportunities.

Kenya's progressive policies on science, technology, engineering and mathematics have made some leeway in getting more girls and young women interested in the industry. However, more needs to be done to realize these goals. Among them is an increase in political goodwill, and the appointment of more women into government to meet the one-third gender rule and generate more role models and policies.

Access to digital financial services and emerging issues

As much as the world is championing the promotion of the digitalization of women's rights service delivery, proper infrastructure and political goodwill need to be developed with a clear framework and road map that will be able to address issues such as poverty, illiteracy among other gender-related issues so that we can create an easy digital world that champion for the rights of women.

E-commerce

E-commerce is generally successful in Africa, with more women taking charge within this digital space. It can be described as woman-friendly since there are no gatekeepers and women can run their businesses from home either full-time or part-time. E-commerce links women to global markets, allowing them to overcome any bottlenecks within their environments. Furthermore, it helps them identify.

According to a study by Jumia, one of the largest e-commerce platforms in Africa, over 51 per cent of the e-commerce sector in Kenya is dominated by women. However, more can be done for female entrepreneurs without adequate information, knowledge and skills to utilize digital tools.

We believe that e-commerce can empower and transform women's lives for the better.

Why is this important?

It gives women the ability to bypass cultural barriers and increase their mobility. Access to and adoption of digital technology gives women in developing countries access to remote work opportunities, e-commerce platforms, education & training, and access to global markets.

It gives women access to more job opportunities. Digital advancements will automate a lot of administrative and clerical jobs which are mostly done by women. According to a study by McKinsey and Company, technological development will force between 40 million and 160 million women to seek higher-skilled jobs by 2030. Digital literacy will provide a gateway for women in developing countries to access remote job opportunities and participate in e-commerce.

It increases financial autonomy. The digital landscape offers opportunities that can be monetized, resulting in increased financial power.

Increased digital literacy. Access to digital training and education will bridge the gap within the information and communications technology sector and other science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related fields as more young women learn about artificial intelligence and data collection.