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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 Non c’è pace senza giustizia, 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

Non c'è pace senza giustizia is an international non-profit organisation established in 1994 that works for the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and international justice. Non c'è pace senza giustizia aims to address situations where fundamental and universal principles are often set aside in the name of political stability and presumed cultural incompatibility. Non c'è pace senza giustizia raises awareness, fosters public debate and spurs mobilisation among advocates, decision-makers and governments. Non c'è pace senza giustizia is in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since July 2022.

Addressing the 67th Commission on the Status of Women' priority theme, "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls", Non c'è pace senza giustizia stresses the importance of developing a legal and policy framework to reduce the gender gap in accessing innovation and technology. First and foremost, there is a need to ensure women's and girls' access to education and information, both offline and online. Second, the representation of women in policy and decision-making, and those fields where they are still largely underrepresented, such as science and technology-related fields, must be increased.

In the Information Age, women and girls' rights continue to be hampered by both old issues and new challenges created by the complexity of global society. The status of women and girls is still far from that envisaged by Sustainable Development Goal 5. If its targets are to be achieved by 2030, it is necessary to remove the obstacles to self-determination and the full development of women and girls.

While innovation allows for a vibrant global civil society and the implementation of new solutions and strategies, it brings its own challenges, including the risk of a setback in gender equality due to disparities between women and men in accessing those innovations. For example, medical research is mainly conducted on men, disregarding biological differences; access to new technologies can be slower and more difficult for women, especially the elders, those geographically marginalised or undereducated. Often girls are as tech-savvy as boys, but are not granted the same access to the digital world.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls worldwide, especially affecting women and girls in conflict areas, marginalised groups such as indigenous and rural women and girls. Moreover, the pandemic has stalled previous progress in fighting sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices: as noted by UNICEF and UNFPA, the decreasing trend for both Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) achieved over the last decade has stalled. Sexual and gender-based violence has increased during lockdown and isolation. As a consequence, girls' education has been specifically challenged, increasing exponentially the incidence of drop-outs among girls.

There is a lack of substantial participation of women and especially girls in decision-making. While consultations do happen, too often they end up as mere tokenism, especially when it comes to racialized and marginalised groups of women and girls, such as indigenous peoples. Best practices implemented by local institutions or, more often, civil society actors and grassroots movements, are not equipped with the resources needed to make their effort long-lasting and sustainable in the long term. The lack of States' attention to preventing and combatting gender inequality results in insufficient or inadequate legal provisions and resource allocation. Among the main issues we have encountered is the lack or, at best, the extremely low quality of

disaggregated data to tackle effectively issues affecting women and girls and to advocate for innovative policies and solutions.

In this context, the commitment of States to protect and promote women and girls' human rights is crucial. It is paramount to ensure the effective participation of women – and especially girls – in all decisions affecting them directly and indirectly, not merely as formal consultations, but in the form of a practical influence on decision- and policymaking. As acknowledged by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its General Comment 12 on the right of the child to be heard, girls are disproportionately affected by gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms, thus States should pay special attention to including and giving weight to their views and needs.

To allow for effective participation by women and girls, structural barriers to that participation must be dismantled. Education plays a fundamental role in combatting discrimination and violence and challenging harmful stereotypes, thus advancing equality. Awareness raising and information campaigns, training and capacity building for relevant professionals must be increased and improved to question the norms that underlie and perpetuate gender inequality.

In the contemporary international scenario, access to and participation in the digital world is even more relevant for women Human Rights Defenders. Every day, these women risk their lives to spread their messages and ensure the survival and human rights of their peers and communities; indigenous women from the Amazon and Iranian, Afghan and Ukrainian women are only a few examples of such courage.

In this context, Non c'è pace senza giustizia's work continues to be guided by the principles of justice and accountability, fighting impunity for all forms of human rights violations. We firmly believe that the universality of human rights must not be threatened by cultural relativism, an assumption that has been increasingly questioned – especially online – by retrograde movements and governments worldwide. As we carry out our campaigns, we aim at amplifying – not substituting – the voices of survivors, in all their diversity and power. With our advocacy, we bridge diverse actors and build multistakeholder partnerships and actions to achieve sustainable change.

Through a spectrum of different project tackling gender inequality, among other issues, at different levels, we are alarmed by gaps that are yet to be filled. Non c'è pace senza giustizia's activities span from prevention of harmful traditional practices, especially Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early, and Forced Marriages, to the pursuit for justice and accountability for human rights violations in the Amazon, to support for women Human Rights Defenders in Afghanistan. Non c'è pace senza giustizia has been active in the field, through capacity building, awareness-raising, and local campaigns to support women and girls in their own advocacy and empowerment; we have also engaged with a variety of UN Treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW Committee, to advocate for children's rights in the context of climate change.

Recommendations

In light of the above, Non c'è pace senza giustizia recommends States to:

- update and align their domestic legal provisions with the highest standards of human rights set by the Treaties they have ratified, and to ratify human rights treaties where they have not yet done so;
- ratify the Rome Statute to make sure access to justice and accountability is ensured for all women and girls worldwide;

- fully implement UNGA Resolution [67/146](#) on “Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation”;
- challenge negative stereotypes and patriarchal structures that put girls and women at risk and prevent them from realising their potential;
- ensure access to information and education for women and girls in all communities, especially marginalised and rural ones, also through preventing and combating SGBV and harmful practices;
- remove all barriers that hinder women’s access to science and technology-related fields;
- support equal participation and representation of women and men in political and economic decision-making;
- integrate gender mainstreaming in all policies to improve their impact on all genders.

Conclusions:

Non c’è pace senza giustizia calls for gender equality to remain amongst the priorities of governments worldwide, against the backlash on women’s rights that has been on the rise. Non c’è pace senza giustizia calls call for enhanced commitment and multilevel, multisectoral cooperation and exchange of data and information to protect the individual rights of all women and girls, so that they are free to achieve their full empowerment, by accessing all fields and especially those where they are underrepresented, such as science and technology-related fields, and to engage in the political, social, economic, and cultural life of their countries as equals. With the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it was finally acknowledged that “women’s rights are human rights”. It is time to stand up to that standard and to consider, at the same time, that girls’ rights are human rights and must be protected and promoted as such.
