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

Statement submitted by WePower – Women’s Electoral Power for the Advancement of Women’s Leadership in Israel, 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

WePower, a leading non-profit, non-partisan Israeli NGO is proactively promoting women's leadership in the highest echelons of decision-making and in elected positions, aiming to achieve women's leadership and gender mainstreaming in all levels of society, especially in the political and public arenas, and change the under-representation of women both at the national and local levels.

The UN Women organization's formal goal of 50:50 by 2030 was adopted by WePower. In order to achieve that goal, WePower acknowledges that acceleration is needed, thus announced a setting up of an accelerator, along acting immediately in real time to achieve gender equality and equity here and now.

In order to achieve our goals, our activities are arranged upon three pillars:

1. Data collection, creation via research and raising awareness.
2. Educational programmes, with specialized tools and methodologies developed at WePower, for the specific goals and aims according to the needs we analysed and observed.
3. Legislation, both for facilitating everyday life for all women and girls, and just as important, for making the achievements sustainable, with the correct, powerful legislation we promote, lobby, push and devise.

All our activities are geared for a wide variety of communities, minorities are catered for with specific programmemes, educational initiatives geared for the Arab sectors, Druze sector, immigrants from Ethiopia, North Africa, and a range of religious groups and ultra - religious and orthodox communities.

In addition to the situation as we know it in Israel, the results of the recent study of the status of the 17 themes for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "Progress on the SDGs: The gender snapshot 2022", it is even more obvious that acceleration is called for, and as soon as possible. The unfortunate picture following the study published by UN Women is a driving force for us at WePower to do even more, to refresh, to push harder and achieve 50:50 by 2030 in as many as themes as possible, if not in all of them, at least in Israel, if not beyond.

It is imperative to point out that in 2017, we developed and launched a large-scale network of educational and mentoring programme, aimed for the 2018 local elections. The goal was to significantly increase the representation of women on local councils and in mayoral positions. Intense cooperation initiative was carried out, resulting in:

1. 40% rise in the representation of women on the local authority councils
2. 80% of the graduates of the programmeme ran for office
3. 20% of current women mayors are graduates of WePower educational programmemes
4. 20% of current Israeli parliament women members are also graduates of our educational programmemes.

In light of 2017-2018 results, together with other results collected from around the country and the world, we have come to the conclusion that our initiatives should be more inclusive, in order to accelerate reaching the 50:50 by 2030; work needs to be done both top-down and bottom-up, both with women only as affirmative actions along activities for gender equality together with men, as education towards social equality. Gender equality will occur when both men and women will be responsible for the expected change towards gender equality. Also, diversification of the receivers

of the educational programmemes should be from all social and cultural groups, minorities, rural and urban, younger and older, peripheral and central communities – from all walks of life.

Given all of the above, in the fields of innovations and technological change and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, we are running a wide variety of educational programmemes.

The programmemes are developed based on 22 years of experience and analysis, knowledge that there are specific barriers and bottlenecks, glass ceilings for women the public and political arena, thus our range of activities and educational programmemes are based on the authentic needs as we know them clearly today.

Following are the educational activities and their rational, in brief:

1. Educational programmemes are run via Zoom or other digital tools, followed via Facebook and other social media. In addition, every programme, has a significant component of social and digital theory and practice. These components are both carried out as a group and individually, as required by the individual student/ trainee.
2. Networking is an important element in the success of the educational programmes; thus, networks are maintained rigorously by WePower after the formal education course is finished and the network maintenance is a direct continuation and a part of the programme and budgeting planned by WePower. A large part of the networking activities and maintenance is carries out also via digital tools, giving the trainees more opportunities to become efficient in using these tools. A specific large-scale programme called “Influencers” was initiated and is still running throughout the country, covering all types of locations, urban and rural, with an emphasis on the rural locations, including a variety of communities, with minorities stressed. Women from over 60 local authorities are participating, including a significant group of rural Arab women.
3. In order to accelerate, create and reward best practice models, WePower initiated a Municipal Gender Equality Index starting in 2013, followed again in 2019, with the main criteria: at least 40% statutory positions held by women, at least 40% women elected councillors in the city council. 50 local authorities were rewarded. The innovative element here is that this tool directs the municipalities to show-off their progress and create healthy competition for the best gender equality local authority.
4. As a part of our understanding that acceleration is required urgently, a programme named “Your Voice Matters” was launched. This is extremely innovative in its structure, and is geared specifically for specific minority groups, special cultural groups such as ultra-orthodox women, Ethiopians women, Arab women, handicapped women – in all of these groups women are underrepresented.
5. Given that the municipal election is upcoming in one year exactly in Israel, taking place in October 2023, WePower is offering new educational programmes. Given that in Israel there are only 15 mayors (out of 257 local authorities), a special action is called for, to correct this democratic deficit as soon as possible. Thus, a school for women mayors to be established, calling for women who consider running for office to enrol and study the needed skills and knowhow. This is a unique and innovative initiative, never done before, an educational programme for candidate who may be elected, and need the know how to go about getting elected.

6. Under the assumptions of WePower that there is no gender equality without social justice, there is no gender equality without democracy, a recent new initiative was developed and launched: “Gender Conscious Management”, an innovative educational programme geared for a whole organization, not a programme for women only, but rather, a programme where all management personnel participate in studying together, both men and women are being educated together, for the benefit of the organization along achieving the goal of gender equality thus.
7. In order to focus on the youth population both boys and girls, a special assimilation of gender thinking programme is offered to youth centers’ throughout the county. “It is worthwhile living here equally” programme offers a common learning experience for boys and girls together. The young graduates of this education programme will be the agents and ambassadors for gender equality in the future, making it sustainable.
8. “Gender Equal City” programme is focused on helping cities improve their understandings and actions in order to become better cities in the sense of gender equal cities and apply a best practice standard reflected in the gender equality municipal index.

Women must be reached, encouraged, trained and supported (even in isolated regions) to seek decision-making positions, which in turn will empower them to help others, and thus bridge the gender gap. Access to the services which help empower women to be able to run for office on an equal footing with men is therefore crucial, if we strive to narrow the gap. Only such an empowered woman can come to elections from a position of knowledge, experience, support and belief in public service. She will also know, once elected, how to make women's needs a priority as part of relevant government and public sustainable development agendas.
