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

Statement submitted by Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mezunu İş İnsanları Derneği, Bridge To Türkiye, and Kırmızı Biber Derneği, non-governmental organizations 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

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mezunu İş İnsanları Derneği (BRM) is an NGO supporting social innovation efforts toward United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Quality Education and Gender Equality are two critical SDGs that BRM specifically supports through social entrepreneurs and corporate social innovation.

Bridge to Türkiye Fund (BTF) aims to finance and support projects in the fields of education and public healthcare for children.

Kırmızı Biber Derneği is an active partner of Türkiye's independent civil society groups and advocates for women's rights at large, locally, nationally, and globally by building bridges with global civil society organizations.

The United Nations fourth and fifth Sustainable Development Goals are about quality education and gender equality, respectively. These two are tightly coupled. Education is a human right and access to quality education by all will be one of the most important milestones in achieving gender equality. We can't establish gender equality without providing quality education to all. We can't achieve gender equality without representing it within the education system and recognizing gaps in equal education opportunities for all genders or underrepresented groups.

According to data published by UN Women, women make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people. Same data indicates that, according to global statistics, just 39 percent of rural girls attend secondary school. This is far fewer than rural boys (45 percent), urban girls (59 percent), and urban boys (60 percent). Every additional year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10–20 percent. It also encourages them to marry later and have fewer children and leaves them less vulnerable to violence. While progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in urban primary school enrolment, data from 42 countries shows that rural girls are twice as likely as urban girls to be out of school.

This high level of disparity in early education for women leads to less and less representation of women in the STEM fields, and in particular in emerging roles in the workforce.

The gap between the urban and rural populations of both underdeveloped and developing nations has widened during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to International Labour Organization's report globally, women have been disproportionately hit in terms of job losses: 4.2 percent of women's employment was destroyed as a result of the pandemic compared to 3 percent of men's employment. The expected timeline for closing the gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years with COVID-19's negative impact.

Those who have faced the gravest consequences of the pandemic have been left without means to communicate their problems. Even though civil society organizations can contribute and secure computers for children in these rural regions through fundraising, access to the internet remains an issue. Free access to the internet today is not a luxury but fundamental in providing education to every child all over the world. In order to provide equal opportunity to children from rural and underdeveloped areas and countries, governments of these countries should build the infrastructure and provide free internet access in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

Free access to electricity and the internet globally is critical in achieving equality in education. Building the necessary technology infrastructure should be a common goal of all nations and be financed through a common budget. The

COVID-19 pandemic increased the adoption of the cloud and increased our dependence on the internet for education. Those who have no access to the internet have been left behind. The rapid development of advancements in educational technology (EdTech) can also play a role in bringing education to remote places, to rural, or underdeveloped areas that we were not able to easily reach before. Girls who needed to travel miles to get to the only school in the next town now can potentially get access to education from their villages. We have an opportunity to turn things around and take steps for closing the gap in quality education and gender equality.

We propose that access to high technology needs to be free or priced such that it is accessible by all. This is elemental in empowering girls to continue their education, prevent teen pregnancies as well as child marriages, and enable them to realize their potential.

Another issue we would like to raise concerns about is data collection. The data on the dropout rates amongst girls during the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be collected and addressed accurately. Monitoring and provisioning of data by independent institutions, and seeking the opinion of civil society are other considerations.

As non-governmental organizations, we continue to work in line with the goals set by the UN in its 2030 agenda; “leaving no one behind”, giving priority to schools in rural areas, finding solutions to emerging problems, and collaborating with local administrations in this regard.

We urge all Member States to:

1. Prioritizing and building infrastructure in all countries in a way that technology is accessible to everyone.
2. Make technological devices and education technologies accessible to students, through state-subsidized programs when necessary.
3. Provide trusted and unbiased data collection on school enrollment rates and dropout rates by gender, in compliance with independent auditing institutions.

Co-signing ECOSOC Organizations:

Dominican Leadership Conference
Soroptimist International
Widows Rights International