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Statement submitted by “Women and Modern World” Social Charitable Centre, 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

Accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by addressing poverty in Azerbaijan

Gender equality in human development in Azerbaijan is in the high human development category. In Azerbaijan, as in most countries of the world, solving the problem of poverty is put forward as one of the most important tasks. Gender equality is a prerequisite for poverty eradication and achievement, in this regard, Azerbaijan pays close attention to gender equality issues. Our women's NGOs are key actors in eliminating discrimination against women and promoting gender equality and with for poverty achievement.

Women's NGOs are essential to the implementation of the Convention, in both their front-line work and through their campaigning and lobbying activism, and have made significant contributions to changing and transforming legislation, policy, and public perceptions.

With low levels of representation of women in public life, the women's NGO sector is one of the main mechanisms by which women's needs, experiences, and aspirations are voiced to the Government.

However, women's NGOs are facing the worst funding crisis in recent history and the sector's sustainability is seriously undermined. Programs and projects are being implemented to solve the problem of poverty, and services to support employment and self-employment are provided to women from vulnerable sections of the population living in difficult living conditions in rural regions of Azerbaijan.

But in Azerbaijan, women's opportunities and support for a set of measures to ensure gender equality remain the focus of the state. Targeted interventions enable the adoption of approaches that also address gender transformation, that is, increasing rural women's access to sustainable development.

To achieve these goals, Azerbaijan prioritizes concrete actions, with a particular focus on gender transformative approaches that address structural causes of inequality, such as discriminatory gender roles and harmful practices, the eradication of which is a prerequisite for eradicating rural poverty, which in turn, will contribute to achieving results at the country level.

It is important to recognize and address explicit and implicit gender biases embedded in policies and decision-making processes through advocacy and the development of women's potential.

As part of its technical assistance in supporting gender issues, our NGO is moving towards a more coherent and dynamic approach to assisting the government in this endeavor. The legal foundation of gender equality was further enhanced in 2006 by the adoption of the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men. This law aims "to guarantee the equal rights status for women and men in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres, to ensure equal opportunities in the enjoyment of the above-listed rights and to prevent gender-based discrimination." This law bans all forms of gender discrimination.

Azerbaijan has adopted laws and regulations that mention gender issues, but the practice of gender mainstreaming by departments is not widespread. In addition, there is no uniformity in the responsibilities and terms of reference of gender consultants.

Often, performing this function becomes an additional burden to the main work of specialists, while the responsibilities are not clearly formulated, and neither sufficient funding nor sufficient time is allocated for their implementation.

I think strategies for achieving gender justice with respect to informality must thus address “the pervasive gendered constructs, roles, and power relations which structure the wider social context” in which different forms of work arise.

While the analysis focuses mainly on how informality affects poor women in a range of international contexts, a critical gender analysis necessitates paying attention to gendered relations of power which position and affect different groups of women and men in different ways. Linking back to the imperative to develop and apply an intersectional gender approach, it is important that data distinguish between different groups of women in the informal economy. It also defines women’s equal rights in terms of property, education, state services, labour market, and their equal rights as entrepreneurs and consumers. The law formalizes the state structure for mainstreaming gender equality across laws and state programs. The law requires the state to improve the legal basis of gender equality and implement programs to advance the status of women. It also states that public authorities must review legislation to analyze its implications for gender equality and make amendments, if necessary. The law also requires information dissemination on gender equality and providing education through the media and other means.

Also budgeting reform in Azerbaijan creates an opportunity to introduce gender-responsive budgeting tool that integrates gender and other social dimensions into decision-making in public resource allocation.

Azerbaijan has steadily advanced gender equality outcomes as it pursues its goal to become a highly developed country. More focused efforts are essential to identify and address the remaining gaps and ensure continued progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

In Azerbaijan, accelerating gender equality and investing in empowerment have major economic benefits.

No society can develop sustainably without transforming and expanding the distribution of opportunities, resources, and choices for men and women so that they have equal opportunities to build their own lives and contribute to the development of their families, communities, and countries.

Women’s employment can be one of the most important factors in ensuring inclusive economic growth. Women find themselves in a more vulnerable position because... work in low-wage sectors that are currently facing very difficult times. Women are at the forefront of the fight against the crisis and economic recovery, working in health, social care, care, education, retail, and other sectors, including informal ones, and at the same time, their level of social security and confidence is an order of magnitude lower.

As a representative of a women’s NGO, I can note that among women in vulnerable situations include single mothers, women who have survived violence (or are at risk of violence), older women, rural women, women with disabilities, migrants, refugees, and women seeking asylum. Their vulnerability increased dramatically during the pandemic, especially in terms of health and resilience, given the increasing isolation, anxiety, and stress caused economic crisis.

Therefore, in order to solve problems associated with economic insecurity, in order to expand economic empowerment, and redistribute the volume of unpaid work, we must expand all possible options and try to work with government agencies.

Representatives of women’s mechanisms for ensuring gender equality unanimously confirmed that women entrepreneurs need more support because they are more likely to have to close their businesses due to insufficient capital and time

constraints (due to additional unpaid work responsibilities) and lack of business networks.

Representatives of women from the rural region of Azerbaijan emphasized that they work, as a rule, in the industries that were most affected by the decline in economic activity (tourism, catering establishments, and the service sector), and almost immediately lost income as a result of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.

In today's Azerbaijani society, the state is facing new challenges. In the end, after thirty years, as a result of the successful operation launched by the Azerbaijani army in Karabakh, 5 cities, 4 villages, and over 286 villages were liberated from Armenian occupation. During the occupation, not a single intact building remained. Cities and villages are being rebuilt.

We, as a women's NGO, also work to disseminate information about the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons that arose in Azerbaijan as a result of the occupation and deportation policies pursued by Armenia, and measures aimed at resolving the situation work carried out in connection with the Great Return. It should also be noted that President Ilham Aliyev has identified ensuring the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of internally displaced persons to their former places of residence as an important strategic task. For this purpose, a corresponding State program has been adopted and is being successfully implemented.

We understand that we will work with these populations to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening gender-responsive institutions and financing in these regions. We believe that we will find a way out of the situation by working together with government agencies and international organizations.
