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Asia Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Caucus
(ASC), Inc., and Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender Rights – RFSL, 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

The Commission on the Status of Women's 68th Session priority theme, "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective" provides an opportunity for the international community to address the specific economic and financial struggles of all, including lesbian, bisexual, intersex, and transgender women, girls, and gender non-conforming persons.

These populations, and those who defend their rights, face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination, stigma, violence, inequality, harmful social and cultural norms, gender roles, and stereotypes, that contribute to their economic disenfranchisement. This includes discrimination in access to financial resources and credit, access to jobs as well as workplace discrimination (including in the informal sector), fewer opportunities for economic mobility, and legal and other challenges in having equitable access to housing and property ownership.

Racism, xenophobia, transphobia, and stigma, including against sex work, intersectionally, amplify the impacts of these challenges, and are exacerbated when sectors of the LGBTI community are criminalized for their gender, sexual orientation and work. Any attempt to enact a strategy without addressing the root causes of poverty, economic inequality, and causes of gender-based exclusion faced by LGBTI women, girls and other marginalized groups specifically, will fail to meet any goal set out by the priority theme.

A comprehensive strategy to address poverty must be multi-sectoral and focus on alleviating economic disparities while dismantling systemic barriers perpetuating discrimination against LGBTI women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals. This will ensure that progress is measured by economic metrics and by the degree of social justice and equality achieved across diverse segments of society.

Challenges faced by LGBTI women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals

Workplace Discrimination

Research shows that LGBTI and gender non-conforming people face discrimination in hiring and promotion, verbal harassment, lack of acceptance and respect by colleagues, and poor treatment by management and co-workers, resulting in financial insecurities by impacting their potential earnings and exacerbating poverty rates. A large number of LGBTI and gender non-conforming people report being given lower pay, leading to fewer, if any, contributions to their pensions over time, resulting in more economic instability for these communities later in life; bisexual women specifically are reported to be less likely to have a job than their monosexual counterparts.

Many LGBTI and gender non-conforming people, including sex workers, work in the informal sector, often involuntarily, facing unsafe working conditions and heightened risk of violence. They are prevented from creating safe working conditions due to criminalization of their lives and work places, and are targeted by police, and face arbitrary arrest, detention and other forms of violence.

Transgender persons are often denied access to job opportunities due to their gender expression and identity not matching with official documents or are outed in recruitment processes. This also impacts their ability to access housing, medical care and other basic needs.

These communities face barriers in pursuing justice when faced with workplace discrimination, due to lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and criminalization based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. Few countries provide subsidized or free legal aid in cases of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sex characteristic-related employment litigation meaning that access to the legal system for these communities in these cases is further limited for financial reasons.

Earning a living is just one aspect of the multi-dimensional concept of poverty, which includes a range of deprivations faced by poor LGBTI and gender non-conforming people, such as social isolation, stigma, lack of political influence, exclusion from family and support networks, and vulnerability to violence.

Lower Chances for Economic Mobility

LGBTI and gender non-conforming women, girls and people face harassment and discrimination in school, leading to higher rates of drop-out and poorer academic performance, contributing to diminished human capital and lower earnings over time. As such, opportunities for social and economic mobility are hampered due to barriers to accessing tools which enable such mobility.

Initiatives to combat poverty rates among women and girls should always include poverty among, and exclusion of, LGBTI women and girls and gender non-conforming people, who face structural exclusion for one core reason: existing in a system of patriarchy and compulsory heteronormativity. Unjust financial and economic systems preserve the status quo for those who currently hold power and wealth, often which operate within and perpetuate patriarchal systems rather than inclusive, just, equitable, and feminist ones.

Property and Inheritance Laws

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming individuals face specific barriers to inheriting generational wealth and are impacted by property and inheritance laws. In many places, men are the sole inheritors of property and assets, therefore LGBTI and gender non-conforming people have been forced to marry men or play a men's role in order to have access to such resources. This drives LGBTI women, girls, and gender non-conforming people into dangerous situations and prevents them from pursuing their desired relationships for fear of losing access to family assets and property, increasing the risk of poverty.

Lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming individuals face discrimination in accessing housing, due to bias and hostile landlords and being denied a mortgage, among other factors. LGBTI individuals, especially those who are indigenous or from a marginalized racial minority, are less likely to be homeowners than other women. Members of LGBTI communities who are sex workers, or profiled as such, are unjustly denied housing as a result of laws and stigma against sex work. Those who are refugees or who are internally displaced face specific barriers in renting or buying a home. Lack of ability to rent or own a home contributes to higher poverty rates by making it harder to obtain secure employment, which often requires a home address.

Strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective

We agree with Secretary General Guterres' recent emphasis on the need to reform the outdated and dysfunctional international financial architecture, as it is deeply skewed in favor of the developed world and those in positions of privilege and power, typically men operating in patriarchal power structures. The current architecture is failing all persons in poverty, including women and LGBTI women,

girls. Entrenched poverty and the perpetuation of fiscal inequality globally is the result of colonialism, neo-colonial, and capitalistic endeavors, which must be acknowledged and addressed.

There must be concerted efforts to democratize global economic governance and shift decision-making away from developed countries and large corporations, address unsustainable and illegitimate debt, and for countries to meet at minimum the 0.7% target for official development assistance in the form of unconditional grants, to address the crisis of the international financial system and the systemic inequalities being amplified. The heightened vulnerabilities in certain regions and countries due to climate change, inflation, economic slowdown and other external shocks, must also be considered in the access and distribution of international development finance.

A multilateral solution to this issue and stronger international cooperation is necessary as economic hegemony leads to exclusion. The world's financial architecture, including the World Bank, Regional Development Banks, and new financial structures such as the BRICS banks, should play a role in promoting inclusion, access, and sustainable prosperity for all, taking action when States systematically refuse to recognize or allow a group of people to participate in the development of their country.

Financial institutions must prioritize support to historically excluded groups and ensure that affected populations are beneficiaries and part of decision-making when international financial policy is created and enforced. These institutions should enact anti-discrimination policies and inclusive criteria which establish red-lines and safeguards to protect against marginalization of LBTI persons, among other groups.

In this climate of multiple, overlapping, and increased crises globally, the global financial architecture must be reformed to meet the needs of today, while centering the vulnerabilities of countries and people most at risk of being left behind. The current financial and economic architecture of our planet should evolve to serve the people within it in an equitable and sustainable way.

Conclusion

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration, the 2030 Agenda, and Our Common Agenda call for an intersectional approach that puts an end to poverty and exclusion. Efforts to promote gender equality in poverty and financing initiatives must address and combat the marginalization of lesbian, bisexual, queer, trans, and intersex women and girls, and all gender non-conforming people. As income inequality and poverty are exacerbated around the world, the urgency of this issue is further underscored. The strengthening of institutions and financing with a gender perspective is incomplete without consideration of the struggles of sexual and gender minorities, and failure to consider these populations will only further economic inequality.
