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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
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 Womankind Worldwide, 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

Womankind Worldwide is an International Women's Rights Organisation. We believe in a world where all women, girls and people of all genders enjoy equal rights and freedoms and live with joy, choice and dignity. We join with feminist movements, partners and allies to achieve a feminist future. Our recommendations on addressing poverty and championing women's economic rights are aimed at decision-makers. We hope the UN can use its position to both make and influence change on these issues.

Throughout our work, we advocate for flexible funding for women's rights organisations and movements to draw on their expertise in their contexts and pursue their own agendas to address the challenges faced by women – including supporting women living in poverty or facing other challenges to their economic rights.

The recommendations in this statement are made in the context of the legacy and continuing disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on women, girls and other marginalised genders. Throughout the pandemic, women managed increased care responsibilities and higher rates of working in health and public-facing sectors increased their risks. The flexible work they are often forced to take due to care responsibilities was hit harder, and many lost or experienced a dramatic reduction in income. Unsurprisingly, the impacts of this continue to be felt.

We believe it's vital to focus on:

- Recognising, rewarding and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work by supporting States to provide services and infrastructure.

The economy relies on women's unpaid care and domestic work for the profit of others.

As outlined in the Care Manifesto led by Public Services International, we call for crafting a global movement to:

- Recognise the social and economic value of care work (paid or not) and the human right to care.
- Reward and remunerate care work with equal pay for work of equal value, decent pensions, dignified working conditions and comprehensive social protection.
- Reduce the burden of unpaid care work on women.
- Redistribute care work within households, among all workers, eliminating the sexual division of labour and between households and State.
- Reclaim the public nature of care services and restore the duty and the primary responsibility of the State to provide public care services and develop care systems that transform gender relations and women's lives.

In addition, we call on the UN to support efforts to:

- Add unpaid care and domestic work to GDP calculations.

This would make sure work is counted and reflected and to draw attention to it.

- Encourage States to undertake gender-responsive budgeting that prioritises properly funding public services and social protections.
- Support gender transformative publicly owned public services that are universal/affordable to all.
- Make sure women have access to decent work and are treated fairly in the workplace.

Women are often forced to take insecure work that is flexible enough to fit around care needs. This work often lacks protections, leaving women vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

During a 2021 Generation Equality parallel event co-sponsored by Womankind, a member of our partner organisation, the Zimbabwe Chamber of Informal Economy Associations, spoke about the lack of safe working environments, basic services and social protections for women in the informal sector.

We call for these actions:

- Address gender-based violence and harassment at work through States' ratification and implementation of the International Labour Organization's Convention 190 (on gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace) and Convention 189 (on domestic workers' rights).
- Support the complementary conventions relating to maternity protections, fair pay, the right to assemble, and protection of domestic workers.
- Support services providing care to redistribute women's unpaid care role and allow them more flexibility to choose decent work.
- Support fair tax systems and stop abuse.

We ask that the UN:

- Tackle Illicit Financial Flows and support the implementation of progressive and gender responsive tax systems by setting up a representative, intergovernmental tax body under the auspices of the UN. This would make sure States play an equal role in setting standards.
- Support a reform of IMF and World Bank loan conditionalities to eliminate encouragement of reliance on private investment and running of services to allow States to create progressive taxation systems to fund services and social protection and develop gender-just policies.
- Encourage the forgiveness of debt and flexibility in loan repayments to stop States needing to pay a large amount of their revenues to debt servicing, to the exclusion of public services and social protection. We signed the Latindadd call for Special Drawing Rights to be re-channelled to those States that need the revenue most.
- Champion the adoption of gender-responsive macro-economic policies – international investment, trade, debt and tax policies that centre around human rights and include women's rights.
- Hold companies accountable for human rights abuses.

Corporations exert undue influence on decision-makers and their actions frequently undermine women's rights. Abusive corporate actions include controlling and appropriating natural resources, violating labour rights, appropriating funds through means such as IFFs. Women are disproportionately affected e.g. by land grabbing and face greater obstacles in seeking redress. There is currently no legal framework ratifying corporate behaviour.

A Binding Treaty to regulate corporate activities was proposed in 2014 but still needs to be ratified.

We ask that the UN:

- Support finalising and ratification of a UN Binding Treaty regulating corporate behaviour to challenge neoliberal systems, protect and promote women's rights, and allow States to set fairer policies with women's rights and interests at their core.

- Support efforts to reverse the expansion of corporate capture, power and impunity, which is enabled by tax incentives and evasion, public-private partnerships, trade and investment agreements.
- Support efforts to eliminate the use of Investor State Dispute Settlements (ISDS) and mandatory arbitration clauses which make it harder for States to regulate corporations.

We are also part of the Feminists for a Binding Treaty Group, which calls for:

- Mandatory gender impact assessments on human rights.
- Gender-sensitive justice and remedy mechanisms.
- Ensuring respect, protection and enabling environments for women human rights defenders.
- Make sure women have access to and control over land.

Corporations are digging for oil and planting large-scale crops like sugar cane and setting up factories on land owned/used by local people. Women do the majority of farming, but their voices are not heard. In Uganda, customary tenures are common, meaning women's rights to land can be hard to prove. Women are denied compensation as this is being given to men in the household who don't always use it to support their families.

Land grabs also cause harm to the environment, polluting water with pesticides and destroying soil through burning. Local people lose livelihoods as equipment and possessions are lost in forced evictions.

At Womankind, we collaborated with our Ugandan partner organisations, NAPE and NAWAD on a research paper: "Re-imagining the Future Beyond Extractives", which provided recommendations to decision-makers and eco-feminists to tackle extractivism. This research came out of the POWER project (Participation and Opportunities for Women's Economic Rights), which gave women affected by land grabs skills to participate in decision-making and learn alternative livelihoods.

We call on the UN to support:

- Phasing out and ultimately banning MNC extractives and a shift from extractive to a regenerative economy, ending reliance on fossil fuels. Ensure these transitions are just for all women and girls.
- Enabling political environments for women to organise to challenge injustices.
- The halting and reversal of land grabs by advocating for free, prior, informed and continuous consent of all communities affected by land-based investment.
- The elimination of public policies that fuel land grabs through urgent, gender-responsive action to redress the climate crisis and prioritise sustainable land use and the needs of women and other small-scale food producers.
- Women to participate in decisions on land, resources and economic policies.
- Efforts to make corporations fulfil their obligations to the human rights of women and local communities.
- Fair, transparent and equal compensation for land that is paid directly to women.
- Provision of economic support to women survivors of domestic violence and the means/skills to earn an independent income.