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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 International Network of Liberal Women, 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

The International Network of Liberal Women (INLW), as a non-governmental organization in special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council, would like to submit this statement to the sixty-eight session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) with 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.”

As an association of women from countries worldwide which support the principles of liberalism, the International Network of Liberal Women believes on the inherent rights and equality of all human beings, as well as the creation of an equitable world which provides social protection for the marginalized and facilitates equal opportunities for all.

Part of the aims of International Network of Liberal Women is “to encourage the empowerment of all women in all situations.” In this regard, the organization seeks to: (1) advocate for policies and programs that promote gender equality and empower women and girls; (2) provide capacity building support to its members and other women's organizations; (3) facilitate networking and collaboration between its members and other women's organizations, as well as with governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders; and (4) share knowledge on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

International Network of Liberal Women recognizes that poverty is a major obstacle to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty, and they often lack access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. Recent data on poverty suggest that:

- Globally, women make up 52 per cent of the world's population but they account for 54 per cent of the world's poor.
- Women are more likely to live in poverty than men in every region of the world.
- Women are also more likely to live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day.
- In 2020, 735 million women lived in extreme poverty, compared to 685 million men.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty for women and girls.
- Women are more likely to lose their jobs, have their hours reduced, or experience other forms of economic hardship as a result of the pandemic.
- Women are also more likely to be responsible for unpaid care work, which has increased during the pandemic.
- These data shows that women and girls are more likely to be poor and to live in poverty, and are more disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Moreover, studies suggest that women and girls are also more likely to lack access to essential services and infrastructure.

To realize gender equality, therefore, it is essential to address poverty and strengthen social protection systems. These systems, as what the Commission on the Status of Women pointed out, “can make a critical contribution to the fulfilment of human rights for all, in particular for those who are trapped in poverty and those who are marginalized or in vulnerable situations and subject to discrimination.”

Social protection systems, public services, and sustainable infrastructure are essential for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and

girls. The International Network of Liberal Women, therefore, submits the following recommendations for consideration of the Commission on the Status of Women⁶⁸:

- Expand access to social protection systems. Social protection systems should be expanded to reach all marginalized women and girls. This can include providing access to cash transfers, health insurance, and unemployment benefits.
- Make public services accessible and affordable for women and girls. Public services such as education, healthcare, and transportation should be accessible and affordable for all women and girls. Governments should remove barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing public services, such as gender-based discrimination and high costs.
- Invest in sustainable infrastructure that benefits women and girls. Governments should invest in sustainable infrastructure such as water and sanitation, energy, and transportation that benefits women and girls. For example, governments can invest in building public toilets in areas where women and girls have limited access to sanitation facilities.

Moreover, the INLW also proposes the following general recommendations to further accelerate the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls:

- Invest in education and training for women and girls. Education is stays one of the best ways to empower women and girls and break the cycle of poverty. Governments and international organizations should invest in ensuring that all girls have access to quality education, from primary to tertiary level.
- Promote economic opportunities for women. Women should have the same opportunities as men to participate in the workforce and earn a decent living. Governments can do this by enacting policies that support women's entrepreneurship, providing access to childcare and other care services, and eliminating gender-based discrimination in the workplace.
- Increase funding for gender equality programs. Governments and international organizations should increase funding for programs that promote gender equality and empower women and girls. This funding should be used to support education, training, economic opportunities, and social protection programs.

As an organization that advocates for women participation in politics at all levels, International Network of Liberal Women also recognizes that political leaders have a critical role to play in the realization of gender equality. In particular, political leaders should:

- Commit to gender equality. Political leaders should publicly commit to gender equality and make it a priority in their agendas.
- Enact laws and policies that promote gender equality. Political leaders should enact laws and policies that eliminate gender-based discrimination and promote gender equality in all areas of life, including education, employment, and healthcare.
- Allocate resources to gender equality programs. Political leaders should allocate sufficient resources to programs that promote gender equality and empower women and girls.
- Set an example. Political leaders can set an example by promoting gender equality in their own workplaces and personal lives.

The International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) urges the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the United Nations as a whole, its member-

states, and all political leaders to take action to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by considering some of the recommendations outlined above. Rest assured that the International Network of Liberal Women, for its part, will also do its share to create a more just and equitable world for all women and girls.
