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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 Population Council, 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 Population Council wishes to issue a written statement to the Commission on the Status of Women under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council to underscore the importance of an integrated feminist ecosystem for adolescent girls to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and empowerment. There is a need for five key actions, which emerged from the Population Council-led Girls Deliver Pre-Conference on Adolescents Girls. Girls Deliver included active participation of 40 adolescent girls and over 50 young people at the Women Deliver conference in July 2023. These takeaways include (1) unite for action, (2) enhance holistic approaches to girls' lives, (3) drive action with data and evidence, (4) increase investments in adolescent programs and adolescent activists, and (5) create space for girls to lead.

There are 1.8 billion adolescents and youth around the world today – the largest in history. Yet the adolescents and youth that represent the world's future – especially girls and women – continue to face major global challenges, and the ecosystem of stakeholders supporting adolescents and youth remains fragmented. The GIRL Center at the Population Council is a global research hub that envisions a gender-equitable world where girls and boys make a healthy and safe transition into adulthood and reach their full potential.

The daily lives of adolescent girls are not centered around single, individual issues, whether it be education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, economic empowerment, or climate change. Rather, girls' lives are shaped by the complex interconnections between these pressing issues. In order to support adolescent girls as a whole and accelerate the achievement of gender equality, the ecosystem of actors must move out of working in thematic silos to take an integrated approach with adolescents at the center.

The Population Council has generated one of the largest bodies of evidence evaluating the impact of multi-sectoral, multi-level programs for adolescent girls. For example, a two-year intervention (the Adolescent Girls Initiative-Kenya) for adolescent girls ages 11–14 in northeastern Kenya that included community-level norms change, household-level conditional cash transfers for school enrollment and girls empowerment groups resulted in large impacts for girls who were out of school when the program started both two and four years after the program ended, including being two-thirds less likely to be married (48 per cent vs. 68 per cent), and have had their first child (36 per cent vs. 52 per cent), and five times as likely to be in school (36 per cent vs. 7 per cent). A similar trend is seen in global literature demonstrating that addressing multiple components of girls' lives in the same program leads to successful results.

There is a need to better integrate data and evidence into multisectoral conversations, ensuring that quality, accessible data on adolescents reaches those that need it most to improve the lives of adolescent girls. Equally important is to utilize the data and evidence to shape resource allocation as well as program and policy implementation to impact areas and populations of greatest need with approaches proven to be effective.

Adolescent programs, girl-led programs, and adolescent activists remain under-resourced. Delegates at Girls Deliver in 2023 urged governments, donors, and the private sector to urgently invest resources in integrated, interdisciplinary work that supports the holistic needs of adolescent girls. Delegates also called for unity among the many different types of actors that are working to support adolescent girls worldwide – from researchers, advocacy groups, program implementers, to policymakers, and more. They acknowledged the strength and power of a more

integrated ecosystem to tackle the major global issues facing adolescent girls, such as the climate crises and rising social and economic inequality, leveraging the synergies between each actor's expertise and perspectives.

The integrated ecosystem for adolescent girls requires a large constituency of adolescent girls to meaningfully participate and lead – not just on their own but building cohesion with all other stakeholders. The ecosystem of actors needs to make sure that adolescent girls continue to be included in conversations and creation of solutions as stakeholders and leaders.

If we take up these actions and continue to work together as a diverse set of actors in the adolescent ecosystem, today's adolescents will be more likely to make safe, healthy, productive and gender equitable transitions into adulthood.
