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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 South Asian Legal Clinic (Ontario), 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

South Asian Legal Clinic (Ontario), SALCO, and Colour of Poverty - Colour of Change, COP-COC, are particularly connected to this year's 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."

SALCO is a not-for-profit legal aid clinic in Ontario that works directly with low-income racialized communities to provide direct legal services, to provide legal education, and to participate in cross-Canada law reform and community development that specifically impacts low-income racialized people. SALCO has national expertise on gender-based violence and expertise on the impact of poverty on racialized women and girls in Canada. The COP-COC is a national network that was cofounded by SALCO that specifically address the racialization of poverty in Canada and the impact of racism and discrimination on all life outcomes (justice, income, housing, health, education, employment, etc.) on racialized women and girls in Canada.

What we know

- Data tells us that racialized women and girls, alongside Indigenous women and girls, face disproportionately higher rates of poverty in Canada;
- Employment income averaged \$45,700 per year for racialized women and \$47,800 compared with \$54,100 for non-racialized and non-Indigenous men;
- Racialized women and girls face higher rates of no or precarious immigration status in Canada;
- Racialized women and girls face hate crimes at high rates including violent and devastating incidents of anti-Asian hate and Islamophobia;
- Racialized women and girls have reduced access to the supports that help to alleviate poverty in Canada like the Canada Child Benefit because of immigration status barriers;
- When it comes to violence against women, Canada has much work to do, especially with regard to Indigenous and racialized women and girls. Indigenous women are overrepresented among missing women in Canada at 10 per cent. Recent studies in South Asian communities indicate an increase of 35 per cent in incidents of gender-based violence within these communities from 2020-2022. No specific or targeted measures have been taken in Canada to address the alarming rates of violence against racialized women and girls and the intersection of poverty to that violence.

There is no doubt that poverty has a tremendously negative impact on all of the life outcomes for racialized women and girls in Canada and globally. Canada, while recognized around the world for its action on poverty reduction and gender equality, is also an example of the failure to consider and address the unique and different barriers faced by racialized women and girls that continue to disempower them, to keep them in higher rates of poverty, and to keep them unequal in almost all life outcomes with worse outcomes in education, health, employment, violence, housing, and income supports.

In any review of poverty and its impact on gender-equality, we must consider the impact of systemic racism and discrimination that create unique and different barriers for Indigenous and racialized women and girls in Canada and across the world. The intersection of systemic racism and discrimination on poverty for women and girls and the inequality that it creates exists even in countries like Canada, where there is active engagement on poverty reduction and gender equality.