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### Commission on the Status of Women

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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 United Cities and Local Governments, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Globalization, rapid urbanization and financialization have led to deep-seated global and territorial divides, with disproportionate impacts along the lines of gender, race, class, ability, sexuality and other forms of systemic discrimination. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented reversals in poverty reduction that are exacerbated by inflation, the impacts of climate crises, conflicts and rising inequalities.

Addressing these multiple crises requires tackling the underlying structures and value systems that (re)produce inequalities and allow destructive practices to perpetuate. With women and gender diverse groups making up more than half the world's population, this necessitates a truly gender-transformative approach to do so.

Despite the critical role of women and girls in achieving the 2030 Agenda, they continue to be excluded from key decision-making processes at all levels and to experience structural inequalities undermining their individual empowerment and collective contribution to society. Our constituency increasingly feels the impacts of women in positions of leadership being the targets of misogynistic backlashes, gendered violence, discrimination and harassment.

Emerging from the recognition of the global crisis in care, rampant inequalities, and increasing pushback against the rights of women and girls, many women leaders around the world have been pioneering a feminist shift in governance, which calls for putting care, equality, proximity, solidarity and participation at the heart of policymaking.

Our equality driven municipal movement holds the conviction that a redistribution of power and redefinition of political leadership will be key to strengthening democratic institutions, which are best placed to ensure all voices are equitably taking part in decision-making. Rebuilding trust between communities and public institutions is a must, and yet it will only happen with a reshaped multilateral system that goes beyond national governments, and brings local and regional governments to the table; one that acknowledges their key role in shaping caring public policies and services and involves women and diverse groups not just in the outcomes of policies, but as co-creators; one that understands people, not profits, need to be the focus.

Indeed, as the sphere of government at the forefront of SDG localization, local and regional governments are playing a critical role in realizing these necessary shifts. Local public service provision is a precondition for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. As governments closest to the people and the first responders in times of crisis, cities and regions commit to guaranteeing that all communities, regardless of their administrative status and with attention to gendered needs, can thrive, through the provision of social protection systems like housing and healthcare, protection of rights including cultural rights, provision of public services like water, sanitation, food sovereignty, culture, education, and an enabling environment for prosperous livelihoods.

To this end, local and regional governments can play a key part in fostering gender equality through governance practices, including grassroots women within local policy making, and fostering care services to tackle gender norms and promote access to opportunity for women and girls. Thinking of what are the rights and social public services that our collective must protect and strengthen for the whole of society will also be key, thus making sure that the most marginalized are not left behind. Yet this is only possible with the necessary financing, resources, capacities and support structures.

This necessitates creating enabling conditions, through fiscal decentralization and local financial and technical capacity building support frameworks at national level, renew global tax regimes and facilitate access to international financing opportunities, and strengthen economic and financial institutions and policymaking mechanisms, including participatory budgeting processes, such that all persons - especially those who have been, and continue to be structurally excluded - are central to city- and territory-making.

Therefore, we, the organized constituency of local and regional governments, with a diversity of agendas and priorities, rooted in local knowledge and community needs, collectively call for a fundamental shift in the multi-level coordination and multilateral system for SDG localization and to:

- Recognise that poverty is the result of inequitable resource, labor and care distribution, and of a global financial architecture which perpetuates inequalities based on inequitable political choices and private interests, with acute impacts on women and marginalized populations such as racialized persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, and the LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Call for a shift in how we measure development and progress, away from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and towards a feminist economics which centers inclusion, care and the sustainability of life.
- Acknowledge care as a right, for all people and for ecological systems, and empower the diverse stakeholders who are working towards its achievement, including the Global Alliance for Care, with local and regional governments that ensure the redistribution of care work, care for carers, and social protections through local care systems and public facilities, to be recognized as key political actors.
- Underline that local and regional governments are driving SDG localization, including of SDG 5, through local service provision and must be empowered through increased local autonomy and financing that is managed in a democratic, flexible and participatory manner, sensitive to local contexts.
- Commit to enabling and increasing the safe, meaningful and active participation of women in all their diversity in local decision-making and leadership, to ensure their diverse experiences, voices and visions can play an equitable role in shaping our present and future societies in a truly democratic and inclusive manner, as per the demands of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.
- Promote feminist municipalism as a driver of new forms of political leadership and shifting power and as a key ally and enabler of the Generation Equality Process, by being anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic, anti-xenophobic, and anti-ableist; and striving to ensure equity for historically and systemically marginalized groups.
- Insist on the need for a reform in the global financial architecture and a profound change in the values that underpin development through the lenses of redistribution, decentralization, subsidiarity, reappropriation of the commons and redefinition of care. Rethinking financing and revenue streams has to be driven by renewed fiscal architecture empowering local and regional governments to enhance their own resources and capacities to localize and accelerate the SDGs.
- Highlight that eliminating poverty and inequalities must go hand-in-hand with strengthening local institutions and governance structures and inclusive financing, not only with a gender-sensitive perspective, but also led from the ground-up, by movements responding closest to the needs of the people:

feminist movements and local and regional governments. We must not only change how we finance development but what we finance, who has the power to decide, with what means, and how it is (re)distributed and measured.

- Demand that the responsibility to realize gender equitable communities is the responsibility of all people and governments, and that different people have different, and equally important roles to play. In particular, men can no longer take a backseat in the fight for equality, while women and gender diverse groups carry this extra labor.
- Urge the UN system, Member States and the CSW to recognise the role local and regional governments and feminist municipal leaders, as key actors for achieving inclusive gender equality, and to ensure their active and substantive engagement in national, global and UN decision-making and implementation processes.

In conclusion, as the organized constituency of local and regional governments, we appeal to the global community, to Member States, and to the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to pursue the radical transformation of our unjust, unsustainable financial systems, and to recognize the critical role of local public service provision as a means to guarantee a feminist politics of care, participation and wellbeing, enabling people and planet to thrive.

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