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Statement submitted by Asociación Colectivo Mujeres Al Derecho Sigla ASOCOLEMAD, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

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.

¹ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Asociación Colectivo Mujeres Al Derecho and all its social forces at the global level (Latin America and the Caribbean and the Global South) articulated in the Great Ecosystem All Together No Behind + Equality, we extend, an affectionate greeting to the bureau of the 56th session of the Commission on Population and Sustainable Development 2023. As a special consultative organization, we celebrate and welcome the Commission's theme "Population, Education and Sustainable Development".

The Covid-19 health crisis has also triggered the social and political crises of an unparalleled disaster for modern societies from which we still do not see full recovery. In highly unequal contexts in which access to rights, guarantees, goods and/or services is not equitable in communities where different factors of structural discrimination and exhaustive vulnerability converge, the effects and consequences of the crisis are accentuated. The accelerated loss of the adult population due to the lack of access to timely and sufficient health services; the wide declines in educational levels, as well as traumas generated to students in terms of adaptability and difficulties in accessing new technologies as a mandatory means to reach virtual classrooms, ended in school dropout rates. The Covid-19 crisis has had a differential and especially strong impact on women, children, the elderly, people of African descent, indigenous people, impoverished, located far from all institutions or considered in remote areas, resulting in a substantial setback for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Women, as one of the most affected by the crisis, must be at the center of the recovery that governments are anticipating. It is not possible to ignore the processes and proposals for transformation that we have put forward and already had in progress during such a hostile and visceral context.

The pandemic has disrupted essential health services for women and girls. During the first year of the crisis, an estimated 12 million women in 115 low- and middle-income countries were left without family planning services, resulting in an estimated 1.4 million unwanted pregnancies; 736 million women and girls aged 15 and over have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner or sexual violence inflicted by a person other than a partner at least once in their lifetime. By 2030, an additional 2 million cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) are projected to occur due to disruption of services due to COVID-19. Women living with children at home report spending about 31 hours a week on childcare, 5 hours more on average than before the pandemic.

In terms of education, out-of-school girls are at greater risk of violence, child marriage, child labour, child trafficking and early pregnancy. Despite this, only 42 per cent of countries had support measures in place for girls to return to school by early 2021. The gaps in education are not overcome in the way they have always done things, so we, women are called to participate in the processes of closing gaps in education in each state (UNWOMEN, 2021). At the same time, other rights are materialized because at present real access to education minimally requires the fulfillment of other rights.

Also, in Latin America and the Caribbean, women's continuous efforts and contributions to reconstruction after the crisis are not adequately counted and are much less recognized for what they are, work. In Colombia, for example, the work of rural women is not found in the reports of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), because they state that "in rural areas the overall participation rate of women is lower than that of men. The majority of women inactive in the labour market are engaged in unpaid work activities" (DANE 2020). The analysis of the

DANE to determine the occupation, unemployment, activity or inactivity of the population is based on the branches and sectors that constitute the economic system of the country. Therefore, other forms of activity, work carried out by women and rural communities are not taken into consideration in the results of their analyses (Colemad-Cracénero 2020). Likewise, 91 per cent of the women surveyed in the Alternative Rural Census with a Gender Approach (Cracegénero) identify themselves as producers, but their contributions to the economy do not receive due recognition given that most of their work is devoted to the daily sustenance of their households.

Women and girls are committed to sustainable development and the fulfillment of the 2030 Women's Agenda, as a starting point for the fulfillment and materialization of their own rights and work agendas with the goals designed by themselves in the understanding of their own recovery process. The collective work carried out by women guarantees the maintenance of the processes of demanding rights and the guarantee of sustainable development that is needed in the territory.

In the specific case of Africa, more than 32 million African children were out of primary education in 2019, a figure that has increased with Covid-19 due to lack of access to digital education and school absenteeism.

In 2019, there was only 21 per cent schooling in sub-Saharan Africa and 41 per cent in North Africa (Magisterio, 2021).

It is not possible for us to find solutions to the current state of world education and the challenges in population issues that we have already seen, overnight, especially with so many indicators of non-compliance that the SDGs have. It is already a fact that if we continue as we are going, we did not reach the goal, it is more than fulfilling it would take us more or less twice as many years as we need to reach the goals targeted for 2030.

In response to the unresolved needs of women and girls by 2022, the commitments of organizations such as the Asociación Colectivo Mujeres Al Derecho, allow the development of a common joint agenda in which innovative and forceful proposals are materialized and executed in search of overcoming the realities that concern women in their wide diversity amidst the great crisis.

Recommendations:

1. It is essential that recovery measures implemented by the states in the face of the crisis, contemplate effective differential, intersectional, ethnic and territorial approaches and that they materialize in the realities of the communities to be impacted.
2. Statistical systems that count women's employment must be more specific and concrete, they must reflect women's hard work and their great contribution to the economic systems of states and to the long-awaited food security.
3. Governments should invest in economic and suitable human resources and in statistical systems with more and better tools for identifying and measuring variables that capture the realities of women and that account for their conditions, household work and specific situations, always honoring and valuing their effort and work, as well as their contribution to the recovery and to resolving the current crises.