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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 Women's Federation for World Peace International, 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

Women's Federation for World Peace International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, commends the priority theme of the 65th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65): Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Several global policy frameworks have already called out and established the need for women's equal and effective participation in public decision making and elimination of violence and discrimination of all forms through empowerment. The 1996 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 25 gives the right to every citizen to participate, represent, vote, be elected and have access to general terms of equality yet, according to sources, only 24.3% of all parliamentarians are women. The need for equal representation and participation of women in public affairs begins with the approach to leadership, and this leadership should be inclusive and accessible to all.

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a milestone in women's rights which strongly addresses the need for all states and entities to end all forms of discrimination against women. Yet, the number of women living under poverty has increased by 50% since 1975. Despite such upsetting statistics, various governments, international organizations, regional organizations,

companies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other interest groups have been working with great seriousness in the hope for a better future towards an egalitarian society underpinned with positive incentives and support systems, building on the family structure. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), a groundbreaking resolution accepted nearly 26 years ago, has provided a roadmap of hope for all stakeholders listed above, as well as for the UN itself.

The silver jubilee of the BPfA, which was to be celebrated at UN CSW64 in New York in March 2020, was impacted by COVID-19. The pandemic shook and continues to threaten the survival of various communities and vulnerable populations due to collapsing economies, refugee and migrant worker crisis, high health risks, unemployment, increasing rate of domestic abuse and violence against women, etc. Educational institutions forced to dramatically change how they operate, the political process affected and a major pause in public life have all adversely affected women and their progress towards equality. This makes it more difficult to reach the women in need, to include them in programs, and to empower their participation in public affairs.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, while addressing the 44th HRC in March, said, “the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the inequalities and vulnerabilities, but it also gives us the opportunity to address shortcomings in respect for human rights... It gives us an opportunity to build a better future for all, where human rights are at the center of our models, and where prosperity is shared.”

Women and girls have been the most vulnerable in conflict zones, during civil unrest, and in post-war regions, surviving through post traumatic life and the lack of economic, social, and political support. There have been various measures by UN bodies and other entities to support and empower them, however, there is a need for a more specific empowerment approach uniquely for women and girls, through a focus on character and peace leadership. This must also address change in men and boys by including them in the empowerment process, not just as spectators or supporters of women's rights, but as equal partners and stakeholders of peace and the progress of women. Without this, advances in women's rights and their empowerment cannot be sustained.

WFWPI efforts in peace leadership training and curriculum development aim to steer women and men away from victimhood and toward their mutual responsibility as agents of change. These curricula, adapted according to specific cultural settings, teach about the necessity for mutual development through ideas of peace and leadership from the bottom-up. Each step prepares for the next: from the individual to the family, from the community to the nation and world. One curriculum currently being developed includes the notion of "Familiarchy," which replaces patriarchy and matriarchy, where family and the concept of common benefit and mutual support over generations is given priority.

Women's Federation for World Peace International strongly believes in the empowerment of women and girls as peace leaders in their families, communities, nation and

world. Furthermore, when embraced and cultivated, their various roles in the family foster their unique leadership abilities in the public domain. Our primary focus lies in the internal and external empowerment of women and men in which each makes the effort to overcome personal and inherited issues for the sake of working together towards a common purpose. Strong hope for change and development toward equality is necessary to influence massive changes in the societal structure. This majorly affects public affairs, by instilling in leaders the values of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

Today's generation specifically in the race through globalization and rapid development, have too often forgotten the impact and power of "hope" for positive change and expectation of success. Therefore, the engagement and support of youth is critical to sustainable change. A strong mind can move mountains. A strong generation of youth with vital hope can create miracles. Bringing youth together to empower each other as they work toward positive change can be an unstoppable force. Intergenerational trust and cooperation, where each understands the value of the other's contribution, can only accelerate advances. WFWPI commends the efforts of the UN to create spaces and take seriously the contribution of youth especially within the new development agenda. Creative capacities and problem solving skills are being exponentially enabled through education, programs and projects.

COVID-19 has become a catalyst for deep reflection and assessment, and holds the potential to bring forth exponential change. Can we commit to each other to keep alive the idealistic, yet unanimously agreed goals of "people, planet, peace, prosperity, partnerships"

and “leaving no one behind,” are not just a dream? What will bring forth this change? Hope, leadership, education, partnership, and mutual respect, fostered first in the home. This empowers women and men to work together toward “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”

Statement endorsed by