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Statement submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI), 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

Education is the cornerstone on which a more equitable and prosperous future can be built for women and girls, and it is through financing of education that we can address poverty, narrow the gender gap, and strengthen institutions.

Graduate Women International (GWI), founded in 1919, is a leading girls' and women's international organisation of graduate women advocating for the safe access to quality education and lifelong training up to the highest levels for every woman and girl. GWI has maintained special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947.

With this statement GWI and its 12 cosponsors listed below call on States to reaffirm their commitment to existing United Nations (UN) mechanisms and resolutions as transformative action towards achieving gender equality. The statement emphasizes the importance of integrating education into poverty reduction, institutional strengthening, and gender-responsive financing. The statement also recognizes the valuable contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and urges States to consider their input.

Education is not only a catalyst for gender equality but also a powerful weapon against poverty. Supported by extensive research and practical evidence, it is well-established that education breaks the intergenerational cycle of poverty, strengthens institutions, and reduces persistent gender disparities. Education empowers women and girls with skills for stable, better-paying jobs, increases their financial independence and reduces the binds of poverty.

Therefore, GWI urges States to recall their commitment to the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027) adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution [72/233](#) in 2017 under the theme, "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty." The resolution emphasizes the importance of enacting a multidimensional approach to poverty eradication that includes significant investment in education; it underscores the need to integrate poverty eradication efforts with broader, modern objectives, and is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1, to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere."

GWI reminds States of the 2018 UN Secretary-General report (resolution [73/298](#)) that stresses, "Successful poverty eradication strategies focus on the expansion of education ... Hence, global actions to eradicate poverty should go hand in hand with education ... and skills development policies, with a strong focus on providing comprehensive primary through tertiary education for all."

The resolution rightly emphasizes the significance of investing in education and employment opportunities for young people to break the cycle of poverty, a commitment that States should unequivocally adhere to. Women's participation in the labor force is directly linked to their level of education. Better education leads to higher incomes, greater economic independence, and reduced poverty. This, in turn, contributes to a nation's overall economic growth and development. According to the World Bank, closing the gender gap in the labor market could increase global GDP by \$160 trillion by 2030. GWI urgently encourages States to not leave behind those older women who were the trailblazers and pioneers for the next generations. Their contribution to the workforce is valuable and participation necessary for economic support.

Moreover, as the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is already beyond the halfway mark, States must redouble their efforts and take bold actions to address the root causes of all forms of poverty. Now is the time for States to unreservedly address the multidimensional, multigenerational aspects of poverty comprehensively.

NGOs like GWI and this statement's cosponsors stand ready to help with States' challenges faced to improve education with consideration of the broader goal of developing poverty alleviation programs and strengthening institutions.

As noted, education is widely recognized as a valuable tool for achieving gender equality and reducing poverty. However, in addition to education, it is also vital to strengthen institutions to ensure success. Effective institutions create environments that promote gender equality by implementing policies and programs, enforcing laws, and ensuring accountability. Both the UN and the CSW play a crucial role in facilitating this process through their various mechanisms and agencies. Nonetheless, States must commit to strengthening institutions as a fundamental aspect of their commitment to empower women and girls and accelerate gender equality. By working together to strengthen institutions, the UN, CSW, States, and NGOs will create a more equitable and just society for all.

GWI recognizes that the UN has established mechanisms to strengthen institutions at both the national and international levels. GWI welcomes the continued commitment of one such central pillar of the UN's work on gender equality, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At the same time, GWI reminds States who have ratified CEDAW of their obligation to embrace the comprehensive treaty that requires concrete actions to eliminate gender-based discrimination in both public and private spheres, and States who have not ratified should.

GWI acknowledges with respect the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The BPfA is a well-known declaration among women's organizations. However, it is rarely used by States for action. GWI urges States to reconnect with and recommit to the BPfA and prioritize mainstream gender perspectives in all policies and programs in accordance with the principles outlined in the BPfA. GWI strongly believes that this commitment will facilitate the strengthening of institutions, reducing the gender gap and poverty levels, and GWI encourages all States to take effective action towards this end.

States collectively agreed upon the SDGs in 2015 to ambitiously promote practical, inclusive, and accountable institutions. While not a binding UN mechanism or resolution, the SDGs serve as a valuable framework that underscores the importance of achieving all 17 goals, including SDG 16, which includes building strong and effective institutions, and importantly to GWI SDG 4, Quality Education. GWI expresses concern over the slow progress made towards achieving the SDGs and dutifully urges States to expedite SDG achievement through collaboration with NGOs. In unison, these efforts can foster a more equitable and just society for all.

As demonstrated, education and strengthening institutions are intersections for achieving gender equality and poverty reduction. However, neither is possible on a global scale without State's adequate funding that is specifically aimed at addressing gender disparities. Gender-responsive financing for education is a critical component in the pursuit of gender equality, empowerment of girls and women worldwide, and poverty reduction. Managed properly it can dismantle the gender-based discrimination that exists within all ages. By allocating resources specifically tailored to promote gender equality in education, societal norms and systemic biases that hinder girls and women from accessing quality learning opportunities are broken. GWI and statement cosponsors hold States accountable for this allocation.

Regarding gender-responsive funding, GWI calls attention to the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and its gender-responsive approach to education financing, its teacher training programs, and its engagement with local communities to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education in

rural and marginalized communities. GWI urges States to reaffirm their engagement with IFAD and foster collaboration for increased impact in these population sectors.

It is important for States extend the benefits of gender-responsive funding beyond the classroom in the effort to bring about positive change. Gender-responsive funding for education is not just about investing in individual girls or women at various stages of life but also about investing in the advancement of States, economies, and communities. It reflects a commitment to realizing the full potential of every individual in their State towards creating a more just and equitable world.

Based on the above, GWI strongly recommends States at a minimum and without delay:

- Foster partnerships with NGOs and other stakeholders to leverage their expertise, resources, and grassroots networks in the fight against poverty and gender inequality.
- Recommit to existing UN mechanisms and resolutions that lay the foundations for change.
- Develop gender-sensitive policies and indicators into national plans to address poverty and inequality and offer substantial training for official and concerned target groups.
- Generate evidence-based policymaking based on collected datasets.
- Develop and implement gender-sensitive educational curricula and extended learning classes that challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality from an early age through lifelong learning, including for older women.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and best practice exchanges among other States.

Cosponsors of this statement are nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) with General or Special Consultative status to the Economic and Social Council: Australian Graduate Women Inc, Afrikanische Frauenorganisation, Associated Country Women of the World, Canadian Federation of University Women, International Federation on Ageing, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, Tandem Project, The Widows Rights International, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women Graduates-USA, Inc., Zonta International.