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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Statement submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI), International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Mothers Legacy Project, Soroptimist International, Tandem Project, The, UFER – Unis pour l’Equité et la Fin du Racisme/ UFER – United for Equity and Ending Racism, Universal Peace Federation, Widows Rights International, Women’s Consortium of Nigeria, Women’s Federation for World Peace International, and World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations 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

### **The Right to Development as a powerful collaborative approach to pulling communities out of poverty and empowering women and girls as changemakers for new sustainable growth**

The less than favorable Mid-term Report on the Sustainable Development Goals provides a stimulus and warning to all partners. While the goals are seen as still attainable, it will not be possible by continuing on the same course. It is now estimated that at the current rate, over 590 million people will be going to bed hungry in 2030, surprisingly, even more than in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda was enthusiastically agreed. Here are a few considerations:

In the pursuit of global gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, a critical imperative lies in addressing the intersection of poverty, institutional strength, and financing through a gender lens. Poverty disproportionately affects women, necessitating comprehensive efforts to dismantle gender disparities at their roots. Strengthening institutions and deploying financial resources with a dedicated focus on gender perspectives are integral components of this transformative journey.

WFPWI and the NGO CSW Geneva would like to highlight the importance of the realization of the Right to Development for reducing, and eventually abolishing poverty and protecting the basic rights of women and girls for their development and the betterment of their communities. The Right to Development emerges as a linchpin in expediting the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in the context of mitigating poverty and fortifying institutions with a gender lens. Embracing a holistic perspective, the Right to Development comprehensively addresses economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, offering a framework wherein women and girls can confront multifaceted challenges. By prioritizing poverty elimination, this right ensures equal access to resources, opportunities, and benefits, thereby uplifting women and girls from economic deprivation.

Furthermore, its emphasis on gender-responsive policies tailors developmental strategies to the unique needs of women, fostering inclusivity. Education, integral to the Right to Development, becomes a potent tool for empowerment by granting women and girls knowledge and skills. Financial inclusion, healthcare access, legal protection, and institutional strengthening – all underscored by the Right to Development – collectively create an environment conducive to women's active participation in societal and economic advancement. Through equal opportunities in the workforce, supportive legal frameworks, and collaborative partnerships, the Right to Development manifests as a catalyst for transformative change, propelling women and girls towards empowerment and equality. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms embedded in this right ensure a continuous evaluation of progress and pave the way for corrective actions, solidifying its role as a cornerstone for sustainable and gender-inclusive development.

The Right to Development (RTD) places civil society as a pivotal stakeholder in the accelerated pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, while concurrently addressing poverty and fortifying institutions with a gender perspective. Recognizing civil society as a dynamic force for societal change, the RTD acknowledges its instrumental role in advocating for gender-sensitive policies, social inclusivity, and the dismantling of barriers hindering women's progress. Civil society organizations serve as critical catalysts for enabling governments and institutions towards gender-responsive actions, ensuring that development initiatives prioritize the needs of women. Their engagement in the RTD process includes advocating for legal frameworks that protect women's rights, participating in policy

formulation, and holding institutions accountable for their gender-inclusive commitments. Moreover, civil society acts as a conduit for grassroots insights, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of diverse communities, especially women and girls, are considered in the development agenda. The RTD, by acknowledging and involving civil society, fosters a collaborative approach that is essential for sustainable progress in achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls on a global scale.

Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) acknowledges the commendable efforts of the Human Rights Council and its mandated bodies – the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development and the Intergovernmental Working group on the Right to Development, in its inclusive approach to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly emphasizing Women's Rights. In particular, we call the attention of the UN CSW to the ongoing debates in the adoption of an International Covenant on the Right to Development. We strongly believe, the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the Right to Development (RTD) holds paramount significance for accelerating the achievement of gender equality and empowering all women and girls, with a focus on addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing through a gender perspective in the following ways:

- Legal Framework for Gender Equality:
  - A binding instrument on RTD provides a robust legal foundation to enforce and protect the rights integral to gender equality. This includes safeguarding against discriminatory practices, promoting equal opportunities, and addressing gender-based poverty.
- Long-term Sustainable Development:
  - The binding nature of the instrument ensures that gender perspectives are integrated into long-term development plans. This contributes to sustainable development by addressing the root causes of poverty and institutional weaknesses that hinder women's progress.
- Strengthening Peace and Security:
  - By legally anchoring the Right to Development, the instrument contributes to strengthening peace and security. Empowering women, as facilitated by the RTD, is foundational for building stable societies and protecting human rights.
- Accountability Mechanism:
  - A legally binding instrument establishes clear mechanisms for accountability. It enables governments and institutions to be held responsible for implementing policies that advance gender equality, ensuring tangible progress toward empowerment goals.
- Protection Against Discrimination:
  - Legal binding strengthens protection against gender-based discrimination, offering women and girls legal recourse in cases of violations. This acts as a deterrent to discriminatory practices and fosters an environment conducive to empowerment.
- Resource Allocation with Gender Perspective:
  - The binding nature of the instrument ensures that resource allocation is structured with a gender perspective. Governments and institutions are compelled to allocate funds in a manner that directly addresses gender

disparities, leading to targeted poverty alleviation and institutional strengthening.

- Enforceable Gender-Responsive Policies:
  - o A legally binding RTD instrument compels the formulation and enforcement of gender-responsive policies. This includes policies that promote women's access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes.
- Institutional Accountability:
  - o Institutions are held accountable for promoting gender equality and addressing poverty through a binding RTD. This includes fostering gender-inclusive environments, ensuring women's representation, and dismantling institutional barriers to empowerment.
- Access to Justice for Women:
  - o The binding nature of the instrument ensures that women have access to justice when their rights are violated. This is particularly crucial in addressing gender-based violence, discriminatory laws, and other obstacles to empowerment, which contributes to poverty.
- International Cooperation and Standards:
  - o A legally binding RTD instrument establishes international standards for gender equality, encouraging global cooperation. It sets benchmarks for nations to work collaboratively toward common goals, fostering a shared commitment to empowerment.

WFWPI would like to further highlight the emphasis on the Right to Development (RTD) at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 68 is paramount for advancing the cause of women's empowerment. The RTD offers a holistic approach that recognizes the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by women globally. By delving into economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions, the CSW can formulate policies and initiatives that address the diverse needs of women, going beyond singular rights to encompass the entirety of their lived experiences. Importantly, the RTD provides a legal foundation, instilling a commitment among member states to enforce and protect the rights essential for gender equality.

Our extensive advocacy, spanning over 30 years and reaching 114 countries, has empowered women and girls, built schools, and influenced positive change. We stand ready to collaborate and support initiatives that align with our mission. The Women's Federation for World Peace International commits to supporting member states and the UN CSW in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, using the Right to Development in 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.