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gender equality, development and peace for the
twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women’s Organizations, 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

The National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) UK is an umbrella organisation working for the advancement of women and girls and the realisation of their full human rights. NAWO links the global and local providing the voice of our members in international fora and keeping them informed on current global endeavours. It seeks full implementation of international legal instruments for women and girls.

NAWO recognises Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as the only international human rights treaty with a specific article dedicated to the rights of rural women. NAWO supports empowerment of women and girls across all geographic locations as a necessary and catalytic tool for change essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a key cross-cutting issue, gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls is linked to other goals and targets, including SDG1, SDG2, SDG8 and SDG13.

The greatest success of Agenda 2030 however is not merely the hard-won agreement of a new International Agenda for Sustainable Development, but rather its recognition of the interrelated nature of complex global issues, and commitment amongst partners to work together to ensure that mutually dependant SDGs address multifaceted and cross-cutting issues to leave no one behind. The intersectionality of gender empowerment in context of rural transformation is one such example.

Rural women and girls play a vital role in supporting and implementing sustainable development. Of the 1 billion people currently living in poverty, the majority are based in rural areas, engaged as smallholder farmers and agricultural workers, with a quarter of female workers globally engaged in agriculture. Women are an important engine of growth in the rural economy, contributing to poverty reduction, food security, and community health. However as primary drivers of agricultural work, issues related to the disappearance of diversified and ecologically sustainable agriculture, and impact of climate change often disproportionately affect women and girls in rural communities.

Structural marginalisation of women in the economy affects everyone. However, well-known impediments to the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas persist. Discriminatory norms, policies and laws have restricted the ability of women to own land, inherit property, or advance alongside male peers. Key accountability and action must be taken at national level to roll-out implementation plans which address discriminatory policies, laws and practices. NAWO calls on member states to ensure that social protections are maintained for rural women and girls including rights to food, land and productive resources including land tenure security. Policies and programmes should be pursued that reduce the burden of unpaid work by providing improved access to infrastructure facilities including time and labour-saving technologies. A renewed commitment is also needed at national-level to mainstreaming gender sensitive policy in the context of rural communities, including gender-responsive planning and budgeting, to address multidimensional inequalities facing rural women and girls.

Data gaps pose a major obstacle to gender analysis. While NAWO agrees that common integrated approaches are essential meeting complex global challenges, different communities face specific challenges underscoring a need to strengthen gender statistics and indicators for robust, disaggregated data based on categories which much include rural-urban status. In its review of strengthening gender statistics and indicators in Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific noted that production gaps for gender-

sensitive data were apparent in a large number of conventional areas including child marriage, agriculture, informal employment and disability, as well as in emerging areas such as measuring violence against women, unpaid work, entrepreneurship and communication technology. The review also found that in most cases conventional data sources continued to be used such as population census, health and labour force surveys, with expansion towards special data collection on such issues as violence against women or unpaid work being infrequent or non-existent. NAWO asks that data be disaggregated on the basis of age, sex, marital status, geography, income, disability, race and ethnicity and other factors relevant to monitoring inequalities and supports mandatory follow-up and review processes as an essential tool to monitor progress, hold development partners to account, and shed light on gaps in data collection and measurement.

The transformative power of media and information and communications technologies are well known. NAWO urges member states to prioritise access of rural women and girls to media and ICT through roll-out of necessary infrastructure, including adaptation of ICT to the needs of the poor or illiterate; promotion of girls' education to enable access to ICT; providing adequate and appropriate resources for accessible and sustainable media and ICT programmes, projects and products that support gender equality mainstreaming; and strengthening national machineries for the advancement of women to take a lead advocacy role on media and ICT issues. NAWO also supports exploration of public private partnerships based on principles of country ownership, transparency and mutual-accountability, results-focussed, and inclusivity to support delivery of infrastructure or expertise; and the pursuit of triangular and south-south cooperation to enhance knowledge-sharing, and technology exchange. NAWO urges that in the Review Theme of CSW62, the importance of ICT to rural women and girls is fully noted with robust action taken.

Experience from the Voluntary National Reviews as part of Agenda 2030 has shown that whilst national efforts are crucial, they cannot mobilise some of the most influential actors such as the private sector or international agencies. However, the participatory process at the local level is also vital indeed such participatory consultations with different sectors at all levels is essential to galvanise action and ensure ownership of the SDGs. Indeed, it is the process of consultation that has proven to be more important than the VNR report itself. Learning from this, NAWO calls on member states to ensure participatory consultation with organisations working with women and girls in rural populations when undertaking programmes and policy reviews.

The situation of rural women is one of the systems of a social order characterised by inequality, violence and insecurity. The vision of the empowerment of women and girls must go beyond making room for them to participate within the present social order which will not suffice to end marginalisation of rural populations nor entrenched patterns of discrimination against women. Gender equality requires profound changes in the structures of society. The starting point is understanding that women and girls are not merely victims or under-resourced members of society, but the greatest source of untapped potential in the goal of the empowerment of women for the advancement of agriculture and rural life. NAWO urges member states to recognise the need for the construction of a fair social order where all play an equal part in the creation of an equitable society.

Member states, major groups and the UN System should take steps to ensure that political will is refreshed and institutions and public bodies working for the advancement of women and girls using mainstreaming and positive-action measures. We ask that robust questions are asked of all national, multinational and global institutions including:

- what actions are being taken to ensure rural women throughout their life course are encouraged to participate in all types and at all levels of work;
- what analysis is in place to ensure robust and comprehensive gender impact analysis, which factors in rural-urban status;
- how can they ensure national economic, investment and growth strategies are developed and delivered to promote rural women's equality and rights;
- how are they ensuring investment and micro-financing is targeted to women located in rural communities;
- what is being done to ensure women and girls in rural areas have increased access to digital and green technologies;
- what is being done to capture and measure the important contribution of rural women in girls engaged in unpaid work;
- what is being done to ensure disaggregated statistics enable robust analysis of the importance of rural female headed households, especially widows. NAWO believes the rights of widows should be the emerging theme of the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

NAWO supports the work of the Expert Group on 'Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls' convened by UN-Women, IFAD, FAO, and WFP.
