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peace for the twenty-first century”

**Statement submitted by Congregation of Our Lady of
Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Presentation
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Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters of St.
Dominic, Inc., Sisters of Charity Federation, Society of
Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International,
and VIVAT International, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The cry of the poor is the cry of women is the cry of the Earth. The abuse of nature is the abuse of women and the abuse of the poor. Violence against nature is violence against women and the poor. Humans are the heart of sustainable development and have the right to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature as stated in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women have a right to life and to equally participate in development of a sustainable and ecological pattern of consumption, production and regenerative approaches to managing Earth's resources.

However, women disproportionately face social constraints, receive less education and are excluded in various levels of political and household decision making affecting their lives. Gender inequality and multidimensional poverty has increased women's vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change. According to United Nations Development Program in 2012, there is a direct correlation between gender equality, women's empowerment and climate change. Vulnerability based on gender is compounded for women living in rural areas, particularly indigenous women and girls. The 2018 Human Development Report showed that multidimensional poverty index in 105 countries reached 77 percent of the global population who are living in Africa and Asia. It identified three important dimensions: health, education and standard of living to determine the poorest and most left behind. The World Bank reported in May 2018 that globally, women account for only 38 per cent of human capital wealth compared to 62 per cent for men.

According to 2019 Fordham University's Pope Francis Global Poverty Index, it is estimated that in 2016, 43 per cent or 1.47 billion women live in countries with severe discrimination against women. The top ten countries most deprived on gender equality are from Asia and the Middle East. The sex ratio at birth captures the 'missing women' prevalent in countries where there is preference for boy children. The life expectancy measures the gap in the number of years that women lose in relation to violence, disease, malnutrition, the report said.

Women and climate change

Climate crisis and environmental disasters affect women more than men. According to the United Nations, eighty per cent of populations displaced by climate related disasters are women. Women, being primary caregivers, provide basic needs for survival, health and overall wellbeing in communities. Impacts of climate change threaten food, water and livelihood that women provide to their families and communities. In 2018, General Assembly adopted resolution 73/323 on the protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind. The document reiterated the Paris Agreement calling all nations to address adaptation to adverse impacts of climate change. The resolution took note of the Green Climate Fund and reiterated a gender-sensitive approach in its allocation and use of resources.

Furthermore, the resolution urged Member States to take into account that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by climate change owing to the gender inequalities and the dependence of many women on natural resources for their livelihoods. Finally, the resolution called for the integration of a gender perspective into environment and climate change policies and to strengthen mechanisms and provide adequate resources towards achieving the full and equal participation of women in decision making at all levels on environmental issues, and stresses the need to address the challenges posed by climate change that affect women and girls in particular, including through the implementation of the first gender action plan adopted by the parties of the conference to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its twenty-third session, with a view to advancing toward the goal of mainstreaming a gender perspective into climate action.

Women leadership in climate adaptation

In the Philippines, in Antipolo and adjacent areas, women participate in reforestation and afforestation programs. This program is part of a community-based watershed conservation program, the Marikina Watershed Protected Landscape, a reef-to-ridge nature-based solution. This program engages multi-stakeholder participation that involves national agencies, local governments, faith-based organizations, people's organizations, local women groups and environmental advocacy networks. It collaborates with the National Greening Program of the Philippines and the Marikina River Rehabilitation Program, national and sub-national mitigation and adaptation initiatives, respectively. The project addresses water security, disaster risk reduction, local and rural and indigenous livelihood using nature-based solution to climate change. There is local women-initiated leadership in the implementation process from seeds/wildlings collection, setting-up nurseries, participation in government meetings and capacity building workshops, sale of seedlings to the government, planting and monitoring. The women formed small cooperative store to supply basic needs such as rice, oil, sugar and vegetables from the community garden at reasonable prices. They have focused group meetings where members share how this program changed their lives. For example, some members used to cut trees to make charcoal for livelihood, however, after they worked with the project, they understood the importance of trees to secure water sources and fight climate change. Their perspective changed from being consumers to protectors of forests and ecosystems. Relationships in the community have also improved, looking after each other's families while parents are planting trees in the forests.

Women are part of the solution to climate change. They must be included at the discussion table and decision-making process. However, we must recognize that the gender knowledge gap is still the largest barrier to climate action. Therefore, we recommend the following actions to support women's full participation and leadership in climate action:

1. Review existing policies and gender equality and mainstream how these can be applied in the context of climate change actions
2. Disaggregate gender difference in impacts of climate adaptation needs and climate adaptation process
3. Address gender mainstreaming capacity of stakeholders through, for example, levels of education
4. Ensure equal access to financial resources and other benefits of adaptation funds

The Maryknoll Sisters of Saint Dominic as an accredited non-governmental organization with the United Nations Economic and Social Council has worked with utmost dedication in its mission areas to educate and train women and girls. The sisters work with women have been guided by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In East Africa, the Emusoi Center provides secondary education to Masai girls while educating their communities. In Asia and Latin America, the sisters established leading higher educational institutions that have produced numerous global and national women leaders in the areas of politics, environment, peace, justice and human rights. Maryknoll Sisters also established centers to help women suffering homelessness, migrant women and their families as well as help victims of sex trafficking. Members also engaged women in peacebuilding and conflict transformation in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Finally, the sisters also work with communities in capacity and resilience building to climate change.