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Statement submitted by Latter-day Saint Charities, 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

Enhancing the health, well-being, and opportunities for women and families globally

Latter-day Saint Charities is the humanitarian arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The outreach of Latter-day Saint Charities is part of a Christian commitment that all people are children of God, regardless of their belief system or tradition. We seek to love God and to love our neighbour. As such, we offer impartial, independent, and neutral humanitarian assistance to women and their families in 195 countries. Initiatives include health care for women and newborn infants, clean water and sanitation, refugee assistance, food and nutrition, disaster relief, and more. We believe that as we advance equality, development, and peace for women, no one will be left behind and families everywhere will be better able to strengthen their communities (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995).

We are committed to Action 29 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which states that: “Women play a critical role in the family. The family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. In different cultural, political, and social systems, various forms of the family exist. The rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members must be respected. Women make a great contribution to the welfare of the family and the development of society, which is still not recognized or considered in its full importance. The social significance of maternity, motherhood and the role of parents in the family and in the upbringing of children should be acknowledged. The upbringing of children requires shared responsibility of parents, women and men and society as a whole. Maternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the full importance of women in society. Recognition should also be given to the important role often played by women in many countries in caring for other members of the family.”

In support of Action 29, programmes of Latter-day Saint Charities provide women and their families life-saving access to basic necessities and health care, lifelong education and training, and serve to strengthen women’s economic capacity so that they may more fully participate in decision-making regarding their lives and the lives of their families. In addition to aligning with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, these programmes support the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals of: eliminating poverty (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2); good health and well-being (Goal 3); quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5); clean water and sanitation (Goal 6); decent work and economic growth (Goal 8); reduced inequalities (Goal 10); sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11); and partnerships for the goals (Goal 17).

Latter-day Saint Charities provides women and their families life-saving access to basic necessities. In 2018, this included emergency supplies provided to refugees in 56 countries, help for over 100 disaster relief projects around the world, and food and nutrition programmes. The Benson Food Initiative, for example, is a food security and nutrition programme available in 16 countries. This initiative provides greater access to nutritious food, education about nutrition, skills training for women, and income for families as women grow produce and sell food to local schools, providing a daily nutritious meal for students.

In families, it is most often women who advocate for the health of their children and ensure they receive health care and treatment. Latter-day Saint Charities programmes such as maternal and newborn care and immunization initiatives support the health of women and their families. Since 2003, the maternal and newborn care

programme has been available to women in 93 countries. In 2018 alone, mothers and their babies in 39 countries participated, which led to greater maternal and infant survival rates. In addition to providing life-saving equipment, the programme develops capabilities of birth attendants to protect a mother's health during pregnancy and childbirth. An immunization programme provides education and access to all life-saving vaccines recommended for children by the World Health Organization (WHO). These include maternal and neonatal vaccinations against measles and rubella, and polio eradication.

Latter-day Saint Charities clean water and sanitation programmes help communities establish sustainable water systems. The vast majority of those who collect water are women and girls. Improved water delivery and sanitary systems can decrease domestic burden, increase school attendance, provide safeguards against gender-based violence, and improve health for women and their families. For example, sanitation facilities provided by Latter-day Saint Charities at schools allow girls who have reached puberty to continue their education. Women and girls in 76 countries have benefited from the clean water and sanitation programme.

Latter-day Saint Charities also sponsors projects proposed by local communities. Recently, a vocational training project in Nepal increased economic opportunity for women in that community. In partnership with a Nepali non-governmental organization, women were trained to make clothing, which allowed them to work in major sewing centres in the community. Some of these women previously experienced abuse or live with a disability. A sustainable livelihood will allow them to more fully participate in decision-making regarding their lives and can provide avenues to overcome marginalization and abuse.

Latter-day Saint Charities affirms that the protection of fundamental human rights for all will advance the equality, development, and peace for women. We believe these fundamental rights include the freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, freedom to form a family, and freedom from discrimination. As all people are afforded these rights, women will be given opportunities to grow and thrive. Thriving women and girls lead to strong families. Strong families build successful communities. Successful communities create more peaceful and generous countries. Peaceful and generous countries will lead to a better world for all.

Latter-day Saint Charities affirms its continuing commitment to Action 29 of the Beijing declaration and urges renewed support for its implementation. We call on the combined resources of governments, non-government organizations, and faith-based organizations to join us to work for significant positive change in areas where women, girls, and their families have the greatest need and experience the greatest risk. The duty to ensure future opportunity and equality for women and girls throughout the world is one we all share and is crucial for the success of the human family.