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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

**Statement submitted by Fondazione Proclade Internazionale –
Onlus, Salesian Missions and Inc., Sisters of Charity Federation,
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

VIVAT International, Sisters of Charity Federation, Salesian Missions Inc., and Fondazione Proclade Internazionale – Onlus, present in over 130 countries, welcome the commemoration of 25th anniversary of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its review at the sixty fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women towards achieving gender equality for all.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, galvanized action on 12 critical areas of concern that remain very much relevant in the complexities of today's global realities and calls forth for a continued strategic engagement by the international community and civil society. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is both an opportunity and a challenge towards gender equality and achieving full potential of women and girls. In this landmark year with anniversaries of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women peace, and security, 5 years of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development have immense potential for transformation that 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development envisages.

Over the past 25 years limited progress has been made in gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Governments have taken positive steps to remove discriminatory laws and enact laws that address gender inequality, violence against women and girls. Yet, we have a long way to go. Many goals of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remain unfulfilled and there are pushbacks to gender equality despite international agreements and national legislations. We are witnessing rise of populist nationalism on one side and profit oriented economies on the other, resulting in widening the gap between rich and the poor which adversely affect women and girls. Violence against women and girls within homes and outside, discrimination and exclusion from decision making processes are stark realities.

Through developmental initiatives – education, health care, capacity building, decent work, legal aid – among marginalized communities, especially to women, girls and migrants, our members have tried to uphold that women's rights are human rights and gender equality is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, peace and security.

Based on the experiences of some of our members in South Asia, Brazil and the United States we focus on the issue of women and migration in the context of today's situation. In India our members working with women domestic workers find that most of them migrated to the cities in search of livelihood with their families. Low educational status and lack of skills deprived them of decent employment opportunities. Rapid urbanization and better prospects that cities offer on the one hand, and loss of livelihood in rural areas, compelled families to migrate. For many of the women migration to the cities was not voluntary but due to various factors such as rural distress, neglect of agricultural sector, loss of livelihood, land grab, land degradation, natural disasters, conflicts and domestic violence. Organizing them through capacity building on their rights and skill development, working with civic leaders and linking domestic workers for schemes available for them, and advocacy and collaboration with likeminded groups and enhancing their participation in productive sector. One of the outcomes is their interest in educating their daughters. However, gendered dimensions of migration have implications for the world of work women and girls are engaged in, and the vulnerabilities they face. Women bear the burden of unpaid care work prevalent in all countries remains invisible and devalued. Absence of affordable housing is a major problem leading to slums, squatters and homelessness.

Employing domestic workers in urban households is an extension of gendered division of labour in the families, and helps the urban middleclass working women ease their share of burden. These domestic workers help the rich make more money as they take over the traditional household chores of the employer. As part of the informal sector, they are not protected by social security and social protection measures. Efforts are made to engage the local governments to enact policies for social security benefits such as paid leave, insurance and pensions.

According to United Nations Population Division globally there were 258 million migrants in 2017, of which 48 per cent were women. According to International Labor Organization, there are 11.5 million migrant domestic workers who have moved to a more developed country for better life for themselves and their families in a conventionally determined gender role. Women migrants contribute to the betterment of their families and economy both in the host and destination countries across the world. However, many countries do not have labour laws that will enhance the quality of life and social protection systems. In many instances international migrant domestic workers often face added vulnerabilities related to work contract, legal documents, isolation, mobility restrictions. Many are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence at workplace, forced labour and trafficking, which jeopardizes their safety and security and wellbeing. As more women enter into the migrant labour force, it is important to have bilateral agreements that respect human rights and labour standards.

Sustainable Development Goal 5.4 stresses the commitment to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate. Steps towards fulfilling this indicator is an important step in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5. This implementation should be linked to Global Compact for Migration.

It is vital to strengthen rural economies so that migration experience is a choice and not a compulsion for survival. As affirmed by Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, on the occasion of International Day of Rural women 2019, “Rural women and girls across the world are a powerful force in global action to respond to climate change”. the sixty second session of the Commission on the Status of Women focused on rural women and girls in terms of challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and empowerment as its priority theme. In rural areas of north India our members mobilized local leadership, community participation, women’s inclusion and achieved sustainability through water projects, micro-loans, farming, multi-cropping and other programs, which in turn raised the ground water, better agricultural yield, women leadership and development. It not only checked migration of villagers to cities but also enabled them to fight discrimination, promote education of girl children and prevent child marriage.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states, “(v)iolence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms” (112). Regardless of the legislative steps taken to address this issue, violence against women and girls in public and private spaces remains a grave problem. Migrant domestic workers are subject to violence at workplace and in the house.

Accompanying women who are victims of violence for rebuilding their lives is a long-term process which involves multi-agency involvement. It is evidenced in our members work in the United States, who are working among migrant women, victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults. Many of them go through trauma and need assistance and counseling in coping with situations to empower themselves. They

work in collaboration with other agencies and government machinery to enable them to get protective orders, stalking injunctions, provision for temporary shelters, ongoing education, skill training, certification, etc., to help women rebuild their lives.

If Member States can create political will for policy changes for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls supported by gender budgeting, there will be progress. In this context we recommend that:

- That Sustainable Development Goal 5 be mainstreamed national policies and implemented in its entirety
- Continue to review and implement Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to realize its full potential gender equality and empowerment of women and girls
- Uphold the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; measure the progress made in each country on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls
- Implement the relevant sections of Global Compact on Migration concerning migrant women, and migrant domestic workers
- Increase social spending and provide adequate housing and social protection to all, to eliminate vulnerability of women and girls in rural and urban areas.
