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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 United Cities and Local Governments, 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

We, mayors, local and regional elected representatives, our associations and networks gathered in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments:

RECALL that gender equality and care policies have been historically and increasingly present in the agenda of local and regional governments., as in the 1998 International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Governments; the 2013 Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; the 2006 European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; and the Local and Regional Governments' Charter for Gender Equality in Africa presented during the Africities Conference in 2022;

REMIND the continued relevance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in times of crises and climate emergency;

NOTICE, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, that women and girls, children, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, older people, migrants, among other groups, are disproportionately impacted by crisis and experience unequal access to care systems, including health and social care, public services, and are among the first to have their basic rights neglected or revoked. In addressing the climate emergency and building resilience, lessons can be drawn from the multiple consequences of this health crisis on all women everywhere in the world; and which challenge us to rethink the post-COVID-19 era differently;

EMPHASIZE the transformative role of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement, to conceive equally empowered women and feminist leaders as an integral part of the solution to the many challenges we face on health, climate, economy or fundamental human rights;

SUPPORT the UN Secretary General report "Our Common Agenda", which recognizes the contribution of local and regional governments in protecting our global commons, the right of future generations to enjoy a fair and resilient world, and in enabling a new social contract with equal and active participation of women and girls.

AGREE that women and girls' voices and leadership will be fundamental for the successful realization of the Cities Race to Zero and Race to Resilience. Their concerns, rights and inclusive perspectives must drive local governments' solutions to address climate change and build low carbon-emissions' communities. The benefits of climate efforts and investments must be equally distributed and envisage eliminating all forms of discrimination and disparities of opportunities.

REAFFIRM our commitment with the Generation Equality and localization of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality, including by:

- Increasing meaningful participation and decision-making power of women and feminist leaders at the local level;
- Promoting new leadership and governing models, based on equity, solidarity, empathy, proximity and the collaboration with communities and neighbors;
- Fostering additional local leaders who place care and participation at the heart of the agenda and public policies;
- Advocating for stronger local public service provision and valuing care workers, with particular attention to the diversity of all women and girls, and vulnerable communities;

- Enhancing all women, girls and non-binary people's engagement in public life and access to rights and opportunities, closing the digital gap, addressing informality and for a gender-responsive recovery and resilience;
- Acting for a fair and equitable remuneration of all work and closing gender pay and pension gaps.

CELEBRATE the establishment of the Global Alliance for Care, facilitated by the Government of Mexico and the UN Women and JOIN this urgent call to action, supporting cities and territories in developing an agenda of care.

UNDERLINE the role of local and regional governments in building caring territories that address and prevent violence against women and girls, contributing to shift long-entrenched social patterns of inequality and discrimination while offering sound mechanisms to support victims/survivors and guarantee access to justice and reparation through local policymaking (local data collection, accessible and safe design of public space and mobility, social life and emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence) and awareness-raising (creation of international observatory on violence against women, peer-to-peer learning).

EMPHASIZE that the responsibility to attain greater gender equality and to safeguard and strengthen women's rights cannot fall solely on women, who face accumulated and structural barriers to their full engagement, and who are subject to additional scrutiny and gender bias. More than achieving equality, we must pursue the transformation of our systems, contributing to end patriarchy by critically examining and challenging notions of masculinity (as well as norms for femininity), questioning gender barriers and established cultural differences between women and men. Men's engagement and partnership is key to securing gender-responsive policies and gender-sensitive institutions, as well as to prevent regression in women's rights and gender equality.

Considering all the above, we:

PUT FORWARD that valuable lessons came from the COVID-19 pandemic: a different and feminist approach to the very "essentials" of local and regional governments, the transformation of how the "public" is conceived, and new notions of leadership and service provision - principles of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement;

HIGHLIGHT the voices of the feminist municipal movement that contributed to the development of a series of publications: (i) "Towards a global feminist municipalism movement" which lays out the vision and principles of the movement: an institutional dimension, women's leadership and innovative agendas, prioritization of the public life and care, paying especial attention to vulnerable people; (ii) "The transformative commitment of cities and territories to Generation Equality" demonstrates the diversity of this movement through interviews with women mayors and local feminist leaders.

COMMIT to improving the status of women and promoting gender equality focusing on women's ability to exercise real influence over their economic, social, political and cultural structures including the right to work and rights at work, and the universal access to social protection. Women, as political agents of change in communities, must be empowered, educated and integrated to achieve policy and sustainable solutions to climate change.

COMMIT to guarantee access and participation to public and cultural life for all, including women and girls, marginalized or vulnerable groups, and to mainstream cultural interventions to help construct more equitable democratic landscapes and city narratives by upturning deep-rooted gender normative rules. Public cultural policies

can help improve health, re-think development and production/consumption models, and build just climate-resilient pathways for all. Women's contributions to cities and territories must be visible through new imagery and the use of a refashioned urban lexicon that reflects women's creativity, perspectives, voices and struggles, and allows the emergence of new role models.

COMMIT to continue pursuing the localization of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with gender equality and the empowerment of women both as a goal and a tool. As the High-level Political Forum reviews Goal 5, the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics and the lack of representative data of women in all their diversity must be addressed, especially at the local level.

INVITE leaders, at all spheres of government, to systematically involve women and girls in COVID-19 specialized groups and climate-response bodies, task forces and response committees, and to sign the 'Call to Action on Women's Leadership for the Post COVID-19 Era', on women and girls' potential and contribution for a just and green recovery, capable of facing the climate emergency.

CALL upon national governments and UN bodies to ensure compliance with international agreements and commitments, to enhance investments and action through Generation Equality and to convene the 5th World Conference on Women, to address regression of gender equality, increasing attacks and backlashes.

DEMAND the full and equal inclusion of women and girls in all spaces, explicitly addressing gaps in digital rights, and unequivocally denounce and protect against all forms of violence and disinformation against women occurring in the online sphere, specially targeted at women and girls leaders and activists, which threatens their full capacity to engage politics and lead, especially at the community and local levels.

INSIST on the value of decentralised cooperation, city-to-city and region-to-region cooperation, for accelerating progress on gender equality and empowering all women and girls. International networking, sharing and peer-learning, between communities of all sizes, particularly through the ecosystem of networks and associations, and with local women leaders will pave the way to a new, gender-equal era.

Women and care to recover from the pandemic crisis

Climate crises and health emergencies do not impact women and men in the same way. As the global COVID-19 pandemic spread, we witnessed the impact such a crisis is having on the rights of women, on the increase of gender-based violence and the intensifying of poverty feminization. As availability of sexual, reproductive, and health services is being compromised all around the globe, the barriers women face in accessing local public services magnify.

Women are more likely to work in informal environments. The contribution of women to paid and unpaid care work and the necessity of providing comprehensive local public services must not be ignored and should be properly valued as we establish a framework for the recovery. Valuing and investing in care work and economy, in the engagement of women in public service provision, and the development of local care systems represent keys to women's economic inclusion, contributing to their transition to formal sectors, including through public employment by local and regional governments.

Women leading resilience for the ecological transformation, climate-induced displacement and migration

The social, economic and cultural impacts of the climate crisis and environmental degradation are gendered. Women and girls tend to face higher risks because of their gender-based primary role in formal and informal care work, food, water and waste collection, management or recycling, and household sanitation. When considering recovery models and the ecological transition, their specific traditional knowledge and skills must be recognized as an asset.

Half of the world's migrants and internally displaced populations (IDPs) are women fleeing from conflict and violence, from disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, a phenomenon expected to increase in the coming decades. For women and girls on the move, the drivers of migration differ from those of men, as do the specific challenges they meet in the migratory process and in the places where they settle.

Women will be strategic in leading these climate action plans, in addressing climate change and strengthening local community resilience. Women need to be empowered at all levels to build personal and professional skills to advocate for climate change knowledge and policy response.

The divide in local and territorial policies and action further reproduces the risk of discrimination and violence, hence reinforcing existing gender inequalities in countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Local and Regional Governments as the “new Carers”

The notion of caring has expanded from being an undervalued (often unpaid or insufficiently paid) “moral duty alien to social contracts” and reserved to the private sphere, mainly a responsibility of women (and racialized people, often migrants), to its inclusion in the policy agendas of an increasing number of local and regional governments around the world. agency of those who are cared for and their capacity to self-organize and participate in public life.

Digging into the role of local and regional governments as “new carers”, the principles of caring are increasingly permeating all spheres of local policymaking, from education, health and social care, to support to people with disabilities, nursery and extra-curricular activities for children and youth, violence reduction and promotion of a peace culture and social justice, prevention of sexual violence, support and empowerment of migrant communities, building agency of those who are cared for and their capacity to self-organize and participate in public life.
