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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Statement submitted by Sisters of Charity Federation, Company of the Daughters of Charity, Congregation of the Mission, International Association of Charities, International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 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

Priority theme: Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Priority theme is integral to us – faith-based organizations belonging to the Vincentian Family with over 2 million members in 155 countries engaged in restoring dignity to people living in poverty. Through Systemic Change, we are enabling people living in poverty to identify the root causes of poverty, hunger, homelessness, and lack of decent jobs and to create strategies to change structures that condemn to poverty.

Human right to life, liberty, and security demands that ‘productive employment and decent work’ be a reality for all. Productive employment and decent work can provide the best route out of poverty and personal well-being. Productive employment should ensure adequate quality of life and economic security through decent wages, equal pay, protection of labor rights and safety.

Today, humanity is not only facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, pollution, and waste, but also are confronting food and energy insecurity, inequalities in health, economic, social, income, wealth, and opportunities as well as increased level of unemployment. These crises and the ongoing conflicts in many countries and the war in Ukraine are affecting the current and future well-being, prosperity, equality, peace, and security of all people. The COVID-19 pandemic not only reversed the progress of SDGs; it has led to an increase in extreme poverty, hunger, inequalities, and unemployment. Currently 1.3 billion people live in multidimensional poverty. Unemployment and underemployment are responsible for increasing poverty levels.

The worst economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in rising inflation and unemployment. Many people have not still returned to the labor force and others lost significant portion of working hours, leading to the loss of 125 million full-time jobs. The recovery has been inadequate and unequal – technology platforms and billionaires increased their wealth, while the frontline workers were struggling to survive. A new billionaire was minted every day during the pandemic – 573 people joined the billionaire ranks since 2020. Since COVID-19, their net worth increased \$5 trillion. According to Oxfam, “billionaires have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people.” Growing inequality, rising food prices, healthcare, housing, etc., could push as many as 263 million people into extreme poverty. This trend of growing inequality and poverty is a great concern for our members working for the eradication of poverty and hunger.

The informal sector, characterized by low quality work without social protection and other benefits employs 2 billion people or 60 per cent of global workforce. They work long or short and unpredictable hours, earn low and irregular income and are more at risk of poverty, lack employment rights and social protection. This sector, more vulnerable and less resilient to economic and health shocks was disproportionately affected by job losses. Transitioning informal economy to formal economy through social and solidarity economy and just transitions can provide millions of productive employment.

The gender gap in employment is deeply concerning women are more likely to be unemployed than men worldwide. According to World Bank, current labor force participation rate of women is just under 50 percent, compared to 80 percent for men. Gender inequalities force women to work in lowest paid, in piece-rate, subcontracted

work and insecure forms of self-employment, with little or no access to decent work and social protections.

Globally, women bear disproportionate burden of unpaid work – 16 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work. It supports the economy of every country and often fills in for lack of public expenditures on social services and infrastructure. In fact, unpaid care and domestic work is valued to be 10 and 39 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Introducing gender and age sensitive policies that reduce and redistribute unpaid work and expanding paid jobs in care services, social protection, and basic infrastructure, such as access to clean water can help women to remain in the paid labor force. It is of great importance for women to have the freedom to work, by choice in conditions of dignity, safety, and fairness.

The Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022: Investing in transforming futures for young people reports, that youth between the ages 15 and 24 years are experiencing a much higher percentage of job losses. The report indicates there are 73 million unemployed youth, globally. It is equally disturbing to see the number of youth not in employment, education, and training – 23.3 percent, an increase of 1.5 percent not seen for the past 15 years.

The gender gap in youth employment – just 27.4 percent young women globally projected to be in employment in 2022, compared to 40.3 percent young men is troubling. Young women are the first victims of economic instability throughout the world. According to Plan International, they represent the majority of 628 million young people aged 15–24 who have neither a job nor an education.

Targeted investments in digital technologies could absorb high numbers of young workers – achieving universal broadband coverage by 2030 could lead to a net increase in employment of 24 million new jobs worldwide, of which 6.4 million could go to young people. The 2030 Agenda commitment to “leave no one behind” should translate to “leave no one offline” also.

Unemployment is one of the leading causes of homelessness around the world. Unemployed people lack financial resources to fund housing needs. It is difficult for homeless people find employment. They lack educational opportunities, money for skills training, and transportation. Governments can prevent unemployment increasing employment opportunities, scholarships for higher education/skills training. Governments should adopt the principle of ‘Housing First’ to provide unconditional accommodation to persons experiencing homelessness and to ensure housing affordable and available for all. Our members are engaged with Famvin Homeless Alliance to house 10,000 people by 2023 and so far, has housed 8,400 with support services.

Our coalition members are engaged in creating decent jobs and productive employment for young rural women in a variety of ways: Skills training in tailoring, weaving, bee keeping, knitting, etc., in Kathmandu, Surkhet, and Dharan in Nepal. As many as 150 young women benefit in a year from these programs. A six-month long Computer skills training for 75 young women and men receive in Dharan, Nepal. Around 45 young women graduate from Office Management Training in Patna, Bihar, and Nurse Assistants Training in Gumla, Jharkhand, India. These women receive placement into decent jobs upon completion of their training.

In the area of social solidarity economy, our members initiated the formation of eight cooperatives in Surkhet District, Nepal, with over 1500 shareholders, of which women number around 1040, and their total transactions amount to 20 million Nepal Rupees annually.

Recommendations:

Promote investments in skills training and lifelong learning for upskilling and re-skilling as the economy moves into zero emissions and just transitions.

Implement integrated and effective public policies to reduce unequal access to decent and productive employment supported by decent working conditions to enjoy fundamental rights, including freedom of association, right to collective bargaining, equal pay for work of equal value and freedom from violence and harassment.

Invest in the care economy to create 300 million new jobs worldwide, as estimated by the International Labor Organization.

Provide policy and financial support social and solidarity economy – cooperatives, mutual and not-for-profits and other enterprises to create and sustain decent work.

Ratify and implement ILO C190 to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work.

Develop gender sensitive policies and regulations, such as adequate parental leave, flexible hours, equal pay, social protections, and benefits.

Implement financially sustainable social protection floors to ensure the right to social security enshrined in several human rights instruments and to protect people's health, jobs, and incomes.

Incorporate 'Housing First' principle to provide unconditional accommodation to a homeless person and increase the number of available and affordable housing units for at risk people.

Tax the super-rich to provide to fund social protection floors and basic services
