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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

In the last five years, Canada's federal government has appointed the first gender-balanced cabinet, elevated Status of Women Canada to a full government department, and launched Canada's first feminist international assistance policy and first federal strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. It has strengthened institutional mechanisms to expand the use of "gender-based analysis plus" across government in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes. This past year, the government passed landmark proactive pay equity and gender-budgeting legislation and made significant investments in building the capacity of women's rights and gender-equality organizations.

However, Canada is not nearly close enough to meeting its Sustainable Development Goals or the commitments it made to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: women are still waiting for meaningful equality. Years of effort to remove entrenched economic, cultural, and social barriers to women's progress are not achieving the results we all expected by now.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index tells the national story. Canada eked out only meagre increases in its score between 2006 and 2016, averaging just 0.15 percentage points a year. By 2015, our ranking had fallen from nineteenth to thirtieth place, and dropped again to thirty-fifth place in 2016. Canada turned this around in 2017, moving up the index to sixteenth place and holding that position in 2018 – the direct result of a boost in women's representation in the federal cabinet after the 2015 election.

Yet, a closer examination reveals uneven progress across the different domains. Near perfect scores in the areas of health and educational attainment in Canada have not translated into notable progress on the economic front or in women's representation in leadership. Most critically, these scores hide fundamental disparities between different groups of women.

All things being equal, we would expect that men and women would be employed in roughly the same numbers and earn roughly the same wages, occupy the same share of management jobs and the same share of seats in the parliament, and spend the same amount of time in unpaid work and care.

Unfortunately, all things are not equal, and the gaps are especially wide and persistent for marginalized groups of women in Canada, such as indigenous women; black, racialized, and immigrant women; women with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and two-spirit people.

Progress in education has not produced an equally steady level of progress in women's economic security. Canada's score for economic participation and opportunity in World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index, is well below our positive standing in health and education. Between 2006 and 2018, Canada's gender gap in this area inched forward by an average of 0.2 per cent per year. At this rate, it will take 164 years to close the economic gender gap in Canada.

The gap between men's and women's earnings is a significant factor in Canada's mediocre showing in this area. Although employment income for men and women overall has grown since 2006, the ratio of women's to men's earned income has barely moved, rising from 64 per cent in 2006 to 67 per cent in 2018.

Canada's gender pay gap is one of the highest in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): we are in thirty-first place out of 36 countries. Average full-time earnings among Canadian women are certainly higher

than in many countries, but they are still paid only 82 cents on average for every dollar men take home.

The gap is even larger for racialized women and indigenous women, who make 60 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively, of what non-racialized men earn. If indigenous and racialized women had been making the same salaries as their white male peers, their bank accounts (and the Canadian economy) would have been \$43 billion richer in 2015.

All people deserve to live and work in environments that are safe, inclusive, and fair. Yet gender-based violence is still a daily reality for far too many women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and two-spirit people in Canada. In 2017, over 75,000 women reported incidents of intimate partner violence to the police; tens of thousands more incidents go unreported. Estimates of unreported sexual assault and criminal harassment are even higher.

The experience and threat of violence is particularly acute for indigenous women; women with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and two-spirit people. Research from the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls found that indigenous women and girls were 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than white women. Almost half (45 per cent) of incidents of violent crime reported by women – that is, sexual assault, robbery, or physical assault – involved a victim with a disability.

The closer women get to closing the gender gap, it seems the greater the barriers become to achieving equality. It is also clear that the barriers are considerably higher for women and gender-diverse people, who face multiple and interacting systems of oppression that systematically undermine their human rights and reproduce inequality.

Moving forward towards closing the gender gap poses multiple opportunities and challenges, and the pace of progress has shifted over the past five years. Having a prime minister proudly proclaim he is a feminist, in an era of backlash against women's rights, sends a powerful signal. Under the 2015–2019 federal government, gender equality and women's rights have moved from the far periphery of public debate to becoming issues of central concern.

This federal government has started to build a foundation for a more equal and inclusive society after years of backsliding and measurable losses. It now needs to cement this legacy by tackling the critical issues highlighted in this report, sharpening the focus on intersectionality and committing the necessary resources to turn feminist progress into lasting change.

We urge the government to support civil society, particularly women's equality-seeking groups whose work is grounded in lived experience, and whose members are most impacted by gendered oppression. Real change can only be achieved by promoting the work and leadership of these groups of women and their communities, and building out their capacity to engage through flexible and sustained support and funding.

This will demand a laser focus on feminist intersectionality. Where programmes, services, funding and research are concerned, there needs to be an intersectional lens to capture the diversity of women's experience and to break down the programme silos that reinforce discrimination and injustice. The fight for racial equality, for example, is deeply connected to many issues – from reproductive rights to justice for migrant workers to reform of the justice system.

It will also take considerable resolve and effort to create infrastructure that can sustain change. This includes new policies, laws, and regulations, such as effective pay equity and pay transparency laws. Public services including childcare, and efforts to change social and cultural values and beliefs that constrain and undermine women's rights and those of other equality-seeking groups.

Unfinished Business: A Parallel Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was prepared by a network of over 40 women's rights and equality-seeking organizations, trade unions, and independent experts. Our report provides an analysis of the 12 priority areas of concern identified in 1995 as well as additional information on key policy areas that are essential to women's progress today. It contains a set of recommendations, developed in consultation with chapter authors and Beijing+25 network members, for the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

As we submit this statement, Canada is days away from its federal election. No matter what the outcome, the feminist movement in Canada will call on the next government to increase its commitment to advance women's rights and gender equality, with particular attention to addressing the challenges of women's economic inequality, gender-based violence, and the underfunding of women's rights and equality-seeking organizations.

Statement submitted on behalf of a network of over 40 women's rights and equality-seeking organizations, trade unions, and independent experts in Canada.
