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### Eradication of poverty and other development issues

## Women in development

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/235](#) on women in development, in the present report, the Secretary-General considers global evidence and trends and reviews and assesses measures taken at the national level, since 2019, regarding gender-responsive poverty eradication, social protection and labour market policies; women's labour and human rights and ending gender-based discrimination; women's entrepreneurship; women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work and women's paid care work; gender-based violence and sexual harassment; universal access to healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health; and the right to education throughout the life cycle, taking into account the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in these areas.

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\* [A/77/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [74/235](#) on women in development, the General Assembly recognized that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the realization of their human rights, and women's full and equal participation in the economy are vital for eradicating poverty, achieving inclusive and sustainable economies and attaining sustainable development in its three interlinked dimensions – social, economic, and environmental. The Assembly noted with concern the considerable gender gaps and inequalities that exist and called on Member States to take decisive action to address them. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolution [74/235](#) at its seventy-seventh session.

2. The present report is based on information submitted by 28 Member States and nine entities of the United Nations system,<sup>1</sup> as well as other sources. The report reviews global evidence and trends, measures taken by Governments and support provided by United Nations entities regarding: (a) gender-responsive poverty eradication, social protection and labour market policies; (b) women's labour and human rights and ending gender-based discrimination; (c) women's entrepreneurship; (d) women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work and women's paid care work; (e) gender-based violence and sexual harassment; (f) universal access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health; and (g) right to education throughout the life cycle. Particular attention is paid to the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on women and girls with reference to those issues. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.

3. Member State commitments to gender equality and women's rights and empowerment are enshrined, *inter alia*, in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the agreed conclusions of the sixty-first ([E/CN.6/2017/L.5](#)), sixty-third ([E/CN.6/2021/L.3](#)) and sixty-sixth ([E/CN.6/2022/L.7](#)) sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women provide road maps for women's economic empowerment, as does the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 5 on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, Goal 8 on the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and, importantly, integrated gender equality considerations across all the Goals.

## II. Global evidence and trends

4. Despite progress towards reducing gender inequalities, the commitments made by Member States in the Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action in 1995 have not yet been met and significant gender gaps remain. Wealth and income inequalities

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<sup>1</sup> Submissions were received from Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Gambia, Ghana, Hungary, Liberia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Panama, the Philippines, Portugal, Sweden, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

have increased within and between countries, both developed and developing, disproportionately affecting women and girls (E/CN.6/2020/3). With the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the global economy has faced unprecedented challenges and uncertainties even after a decade of crisis, indebtedness, fiscal austerity and deepening inequalities in the wake of the great recession.<sup>2</sup> The economic, social and health ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded the intensifying impacts of the climate and environmental crises, pushing people, in particular women and girls, further behind. It is increasingly unlikely that the Sustainable Development Goals will be reached by 2030 without decisive action at all levels,<sup>3</sup> adding further urgency to the Decade of Action and the ambition of Our Common Agenda (A/75/982). In the case of Goal 5, the world is not on track to achieve gender equality and more than half the data needed to monitor progress is unavailable.<sup>4</sup> Out of the 18 indicators for Goal 5, only one, on the proportion of seats held by women in local governments, is close to target, while three others critical for gender equality – time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, decision-making on sexual and reproductive health and gender-responsive budgeting – are far or very far from target.<sup>5</sup>

5. Global poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over two decades with 97 million people falling into extreme poverty in the wake of the pandemic.<sup>6</sup> In 2021, COVID-19 induced poverty deepened as a result of waves of virus resurgence, lack of global vaccination, soaring debt levels, rising food prices, massive losses of jobs and livelihoods – especially among women in the informal economy – and weakened social protection systems that left the poorest unprotected. Inequalities between and within countries increased as rates of recovery between rich and poor countries diverged, with COVID-19 worsening poverty among the world’s poorest people.<sup>7</sup> In 2022, the pandemic’s lingering impacts and sluggish recovery in many countries have been exacerbated by rising inflation and the effects of the war in Ukraine, which could lead to an additional 75 to 95 million people living in extreme poverty this year.<sup>8</sup> The ability of Governments in developing country to mitigate these combined and intensifying impacts by applying social protection measures has been limited by shrinking fiscal space owing to the exigencies of the pandemic response and recovery.<sup>9</sup>

6. The gender poverty gap is increasingly visible as the pandemic wreaks havoc with the already precarious economic security of women, such that more women than men are being pushed into extreme poverty. The total number of women and girls living on less than \$1.90 a day was likely to reach 435 million in 2021, up from 398.5 million in 2019.<sup>10</sup> In particular, women between 25 and 34 years old are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty, an age span that coincides with the increased expenses of family formation, while unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities constrain their access to paid work. In 2021, it was estimated that for

<sup>2</sup> Isabel Ortiz and Matthew Cummins, “The austerity decade 2010–20”, *Social Policy and Society*, vol. 20, No. 1 (January 2021).

<sup>3</sup> *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022* (United Nations publication, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* (United Nations publication, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Ginette Azcona and others, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2021* (New York, UN-Women and United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Gerszon Mahler and others, “Updated estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: turning the corner on the pandemic in 2021?”, World Bank blog, 24 June 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; and Carolina Sánchez-Páramo and others, “COVID-19 leaves a legacy of rising poverty and widening inequality”, World Bank blog, 7 October 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Gerszon Mahler and others, “Pandemic, prices, and poverty”, World Bank blog, 13 April 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Azcona and others, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*.

people aged 25 to 34, globally, 118 women for every 100 men would be living in poverty, and that ratio could rise to 121 poor women for every 100 poor men by 2030.<sup>11</sup> The gender gap in food insecurity also widened from 1.7 per cent in 2019 to over 4 per cent in 2021, with 31.9 per cent of women moderately or severely food insecure compared with 27.6 per cent of men, driven by gendered pandemic economic impacts and heightening the vulnerability of women and girls to malnutrition, hunger and poverty.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the gender gap in account ownership narrowed from 9 to 6 per cent, reflecting the increased adoption of digital financial services during COVID-19.<sup>13</sup>

7. The global gender gap in labour force participation is stubbornly persistent, hovering at 30 per cent since 1990, with men's and women's participation at around 80 and 50 per cent, respectively; in five of seven regions, more than half of working-age women participate in the labour market, but a quarter or less do in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>14</sup> A notable increase of 11 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean was associated with investments in education and care services, declining fertility rates and access to technology, among other factors.<sup>15</sup> The gender pay gap has shown similar intransigence, remaining at 20 per cent, on average, across countries.<sup>16</sup> Yet, although 70 per cent of women and 66 per cent of men worldwide would prefer women have paid work,<sup>17</sup> the gender gap in labour force participation between prime-age men and women, 25 to 54 years old, is even larger at 43 per cent, although with significant regional variations. Virtually all men in that age group participate in the labour force, 95 per cent compared with 52 per cent of women. This stark difference can be attributed to the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work borne by women, which increases with marriage and even more so with children,<sup>18</sup> and is the main reason working-aged women give for not being in the labour force.<sup>19</sup>

8. Even before the pandemic women did on average three times more unpaid care and domestic work than men globally, and six times as much in Northern Africa and Western Asia,<sup>20</sup> which has dramatically increased during the pandemic. Owing to COVID-19 containment, lockdowns and school and care centre closures, the burgeoning volume of unpaid care and domestic work continues to be carried out by women and girls, squeezing women out of the labour force, in many cases

<sup>11</sup> Ginette Azcona and others, *From Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19* (New York, UN-Women, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> FAO and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022: Repurposing Food and Agricultural Policies to Make Healthy Diets More Affordable* (Rome, FAO, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Asli Demirgüç-Kunt and others, *Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, "Female labour force participation", Gender Data Portal. Available at <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/data-stories/flfp-data-story/> (access on 1 February 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and International Labour Organization (ILO), *Evolution of and Prospects for Women's Labour Participation in Latin America*, Employment Situation in Latin America and the Caribbean Series, No. 21 (Santiago, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> ILO, *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What Lies behind Gender Pay Gaps?* (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> ILO and Gallup, *Towards a Better Future for Women and Work: Voices of Women and Men* (2017).

<sup>18</sup> Rosina Gammarano, "Having kids sets back women's labour force participation more so than getting married", ILOSTAT blog, 3 March 2020.

<sup>19</sup> ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work* (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (New York, 2019).

permanently.<sup>21</sup> By the same token, 1.6 billion learners left school at the height of the pandemic, but girls' engagement with remote learning was compromised by technological difficulties and unpaid care and domestic work demands, and while both girls and boys face multiple barriers to returning to and completing school, 11 million girls may not return to school at all, in addition to the 130 million girls who were already out of school before the COVID-19 pandemic, putting their present and future wellbeing at risk.<sup>22</sup>

9. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened gender inequalities in the world of work, decimating economic sectors where women workers are overrepresented and causing a shadow pandemic of escalating violence against women and girls.<sup>23</sup> Globally, 40 per cent of all employed women work in hard-hit sectors, including accommodation and food services; wholesale and retail trade; real estate, business and administrative activities; and manufacturing.<sup>24</sup> Of the total global employment losses in 2020 of 114 million jobs, relative to 2019, across regions and income categories employment losses were 5 per cent higher for women than men.<sup>25</sup> Young women were acutely affected by the employment crisis, losing roughly twice as many jobs as young men.<sup>26</sup> Women's enterprises, in particular micro-enterprises in the hospitality and other affected sectors, suffered disproportionately and received less public support than men's enterprises in the pandemic response and recovery.<sup>27</sup> Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women and girls was of epidemic proportions, with 30 per cent of women over 15 years of age subject to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetimes, and it increased during pandemic lockdowns.<sup>28</sup> Increased remote work during the pandemic spurred a higher risk of online workplace violence, harassment and cyberbullying.<sup>29</sup> Despite withstanding those shocks, women have been critical to the pandemic response and recovery as household, community and workplace managers, activists and leaders at all levels and essential workers.<sup>30</sup>

10. For the 740 million women in the informal economy with little or no social protection, including essential workers, domestic workers and migrant workers, the pandemic brought on debilitating economic hardship in the form of increased poverty, food insecurity, asset depletion and debt.<sup>31</sup> Self-employed workers, especially in the informal economy, suffered disproportionately as income support and other measures

<sup>21</sup> UN-Women, "COVID-19 and the care economy: immediate action and structural transformation for a gender-responsive recovery", Policy Brief, No. 16 (New York, 2020); and ILO, "An uneven and gender-unequal COVID-19 recovery: update on gender and employment trends", October 2021.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, *When Schools Shut: Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures* (Paris, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> UN-Women, "Addressing the economic fallout of COVID-19: pathways and policy options for a gender-responsive recovery", Policy Brief, No. 15 (New York, 2020); and UN-Women, "COVID-19 and violence against women and girls: addressing the shadow pandemic", Policy Brief, No. 17 (New York, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> ILO, "ILO monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 2nd ed., 7 April 2020.

<sup>25</sup> ILO, "ILO monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 7th ed., 25 January 2021.

<sup>26</sup> ILO, "An uneven and gender-unequal COVID-19 recovery: update on gender and employment trends 2021", October 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Jessica Torres and others, "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women-led businesses", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 9817 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2021).

<sup>28</sup> WHO, "Violence against women", 9 March 2021; and UN-Women, "Addressing the economic fallout of COVID-19".

<sup>29</sup> ILO, "ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190): 12 ways it can support the COVID-19 response and recovery", May 2020.

<sup>30</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil* (New York, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> UN-Women, *Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice* (New York, 2021).

were ineffective in protecting their livelihoods beyond the short term.<sup>32</sup> Care and health workers, of whom women represent the vast majority, have received increased recognition during the pandemic; but this has not, for the most part, been reflected in higher wages and improved working conditions.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, women's physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health, has borne the brunt of the crisis, largely owing to disruptions in health care access and health-care services and overwhelming paid and unpaid care work stresses.<sup>34</sup>

11. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for the economic empowerment of women and the economic and social effects of the pandemic could well reverse progress made on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Virtually all countries have taken measures to contain the virus, to shore up collapsing health and social security systems and to keep economies, institutions and households afloat through fiscal stimulus and economic recovery packages. However, the bulk of those packages are not designed with a gender lens and most measures are gender blind. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker analyses nearly 5000 measures across 226 countries and territories and has determined that 1605 are gender sensitive, of those 853 measures in 163 countries focus on violence against women and girls, 526 in 161 countries strengthen women's economic security and 226 in 93 countries address unpaid care work. Of the 3099 social protection and labour market measures adopted, only 12 per cent support women's economic security and a mere 7 per cent respond to the care crisis.<sup>35</sup>

12. The fissures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis have exposed the enduring unequal relations of power between men and women in the household and society and the concomitant constraints on women's economic autonomy and security. Women should be equitably represented in pandemic decision-making and leadership but are strikingly underrepresented in government COVID-19 task forces, reflecting pre-pandemic barriers to women's participation in public life. Women are just 24 per cent of the 262 task forces across 130 countries with available data, and 10 per cent have no women. Women lead only 18 percent of 414 task forces across 184 countries, 82 per cent of which are dominated by men and only 7 per cent achieve gender parity.<sup>36</sup> Women's economic participation, decision-making and leadership are key to their empowerment, but they remain largely excluded from spaces of power; women made up 39 per cent of the world's workers before the pandemic's job losses, but only held only 28.3 per cent of managerial positions in 2020, a mere 3 per cent increase since 2000.<sup>37</sup>

13. Discriminatory laws, policies and social norms persist in impeding women's full and equal participation in the economy. Across 190 countries, women have only three-quarters of the legal rights of men, which means that 2.4 billion working-age women lack equal economic opportunities.<sup>38</sup> Statutory and customary laws and practices restricting the physical integrity of women and girls and access to education and justice, as well as women's access to productive and financial resources and paid

<sup>32</sup> ILO, "ILO monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", 7th ed..

<sup>33</sup> UN-Women, *Beyond COVID-19*.

<sup>34</sup> Abiola Awofeso and others, "COVID-19 and women and girls' health in low and middle-income countries: an updated review of the evidence", CGD Policy Paper, No. 234 (Washington, D.C., Centre for Global Development, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021* (United Nations publication, 2021); and *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2022* (Washington D.C., 2022).

employment greatly constrain their ability to exercise their human rights and participate in the economy.<sup>39</sup> Worldwide women's lower bargaining power and status in the household undermine their ability to control their own or household income, determine the amount of money to save and invest, decide on expenditures on education, health, and food and nutrition and even to negotiate their own fertility. Increasing women's access to resources and to their own income strengthens their agency in households and facilitates their participation in the labour force.<sup>40</sup>

### **III. Measures taken by Member States and support by United Nations entities**

#### **A. Gender-responsive poverty eradication, social protection and labour market policies**

14. It is increasingly evident that an inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is only possible if gender equality is at the centre of social protection and labour market policies.<sup>41</sup> Virtually all reporting Member States have enacted measures to address widening gender gaps in labour markets, social protection and poverty, many as part of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts but others that are integrated into national sustainable development and gender equality plans and strategies.

15. To mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on women's living conditions, a programme, "Solidarity Income", was established by Colombia, with a target of 30 per cent women heads of household, benefiting 1.9 million women. Azerbaijan provided food assistance to families affected by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Czechia expanded care benefits for parents of children aged up to 13 years who cannot work because of school or care facility closures as a result of the pandemic and provided a one-time payment for self-employed persons whose businesses were affected, including in sectors dominated by women. A national economic stimulus programme in Liberia provided food to vulnerable households and supported market women and small informal traders to withstand the crisis. The national economic recovery plan in Malaysia provided a one-off payment or cash transfer, benefiting 150,000 poor single mothers. Panama offered emergency social assistance to the most affected, including food packages, cash transfers and digital vouchers. Portugal provided expanded unemployment benefits and a COVID-19 sickness benefit granted for a maximum of 28 days through the end of 2021. Such social protection measures targeting marginalized women have provided critical support and potentially increased resilience to future shocks.<sup>42</sup>

16. A range of labour market policies were enacted to cope with the economic and social fallout of the pandemic and promote the economic empowerment of women workers and entrepreneurs. As part of its economic recovery, Colombia supports women working in key traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as construction, housing, energy, mining and infrastructure, with the goal of reaching 800,000 women by 2022, a target surpassed in 2021 with 970,353 women benefiting. In 2021, Czechia approved bonuses for health-care employees treating patients with COVID-19; 98 per

<sup>39</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *SIGI 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities – Social Institutions and Gender Index* (Paris, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015); and UN-Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020*.

<sup>41</sup> *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022*; and UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

<sup>42</sup> UN-Women and UNDP, *Government Responses to COVID-19*.

cent of nurses and midwives and 54 per cent of doctors were women in 2020. In Sweden, during weeks 20 through 36 of their pregnancy, women may apply for pregnancy benefits if their jobs keep them from working at home and they risk contracting COVID-19 at their workplace. In Mongolia, the “Women’s Employment Support Programme (2022)” aims to increase women’s employment, support their return to the labour market, address the employment challenges of women outside the workforce, provide mothers of young children with long-term care at home and enhance women’s digital and other skills. Similarly, in Portugal, the “UPskill” programme motivates and train women to start new careers in information and communications technologies. In 2022, Türkiye launched the “Young Women Building Their Future” project, which focuses on the estimated 3.5 million young women in the country who are not in employment, education or training.

17. In El Salvador, the Trust for Economic Reactivation provides financial resources into micro, small and medium enterprises, including informal businesses affected by the pandemic, supporting thousands of women fishers, artists, artisans, transport providers, market women and women with disabilities. Similarly, in the Gambia, a programme targeted women working in the fisheries value chain to offset the impacts of the COVID-19. In Armenia, the “Economic Development of Women: accelerator for Economic Empowerment” programme supports women’s entrepreneurship and new women-led enterprises as part of the COVID-19 recovery. In Malaysia, the “MyKasih Kapital” initiative provided start-up capital to encourage women affected by COVID-19 to start a business, especially e-commerce.

18. Member States implemented gender-responsive poverty reduction strategies, for example, in the Philippines, cash transfers are provided to poor households for a maximum of seven years to improve health, nutrition, and education levels; women were more than 85 per cent of the grantees in over 4 million households benefiting in 2021. The Philippines enacted the so-called “Magna Carta of the Poor” in 1990 for the progressive realization of the rights of the poor to adequate food, decent work with gender equality, quality education, adequate housing and the highest attainable standard of health with gender-responsive health services. In terms of advances in gender-responsive social protection, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gender Action Plan (2018–2022) mainstreams gender equality in public and private life, identifying social protection as a priority for all citizens. In Mexico, the Sectoral Welfare Programme (2020–2024) encompasses gender-responsive pensions for the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as support for children and children of working mothers. Under the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, Turkmenistan implemented a project (2020–2022) to improve its social protection system with community-based services focusing on children, people with disabilities, the elderly, youth at risk and women facing gender-based violence.

19. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supports gender-responsive social protection strategies in Mexico through the “Closing gaps: extending social protection in Mexico” programme focusing on agricultural workers, and in Egypt through combining social protection and livelihood support for rural women, including sustainable horticultural and agricultural practices, micro and small agrifood enterprises and awareness about nutritious foods and healthy diets. The World Food Programme (WFP) has empowered indigenous women in Guatemala by providing social protection in the form of climate risk insurance and increasing their climate risk management skills to build climate resilience. In Bangladesh, WFP supports the digitalization of cash transfer social protection programmes such that payments are transferred directly to women’s bank or mobile money accounts, strengthening women’s digital and financial inclusion and economic empowerment.

20. The Women Count programme, led by UN-Women, conducted rapid gender assessment surveys to capture the gendered consequences of COVID-19, focusing on



economic activities and resources, unpaid care and domestic work, access to goods and services, emotional and physical well-being and relief measures. Findings from nearly 100,000 respondents across 58 countries have demonstrated that women and men experience the effects of the pandemic differently. The findings have informed critical gender-responsive policies and recovery plans to build back better. FAO has also collaborated with several organizations to conduct studies of the pandemic's gendered impacts on rural households in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

21. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions was launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2021 to create 400 million decent jobs, including in the green, digital and care economies, and to extend social protection coverage to the 4 billion people currently excluded.

## **B. Women's labour and human rights and ending gender-based discrimination**

22. Nearly all Member States report advances in realizing women's labour and human rights and ending gender-based discrimination at work, including through formalizing work in the informal economy. In Argentina, the National Plan for Equality in Diversity (2021–2023) seeks to overcome gender inequalities and their differential impacts on women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, and the National Programme for Gender Equality in Work, Employment and Production, launched in 2021, aims to reduce structural gender gaps and segregation in the world of work from an intersectional and human rights perspective, involving the public and private sectors, trade unions and the social and solidarity economy. In Portugal, the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (2018–2030) contains action plans on equality between men and women, preventing and combating violence against women, including domestic violence, and combating discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics.

23. In Armenia, the Gender Policy Strategy (2019–2023) helps women and men to exercise their rights and equal opportunities. In Burkina Faso, the National Gender Strategy (2020–2024) promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through concrete actions at all central, local and community levels in the priority areas of national development. Similarly, the Gender Equality Strategy (2021–2030) in Czechia sets 434 concrete measures to be implemented by specific state administration bodies, which are responsible for reporting annually. In El Salvador, the National Equality Plan (2021–2025) also commits State institutions at the national, sectoral and municipal levels to advance equality and combat discrimination against women. In Türkiye, the Eleventh Development Plan (2019–2023) aims to prevent all forms of discrimination against women, ensuring women are empowered and benefit equally from rights and opportunities in all areas of social life.

24. Regarding to specific measures to support women's income and equal pay for work of equal value, Maldives established a minimum wage for the first time in January 2022, with the intention of increasing the average salaries and income of working women. In Mexico, the Minimum Wage Policy (2018–2024) reduced the income gap between men and women, with more women workers receiving at least the mandated minimum wage. In 2020, Sweden established the commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings to promote gender-equal pay, workplaces and distribution of public support measures. In El Salvador, a 2019 decree guarantees equal pay between men, women and people with disabilities who carry out identical activities in the same company. Since 2019, Portugal publishes an annual barometer of remuneration differences between men and women to promote reflection on, monitoring and practice of equal pay for work of equal value. The Equal Pay

International Coalition with 51 members, including 23 Governments, takes global, regional and national actions in support of Governments and workers' and employers' organizations to reduce the gender pay gap.

25. The transition of women from informal to formal employment is a key policy area for improving the terms and conditions of employment of poor working women, including migrant women and domestic workers. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Employment Strategy (2018–2021) aimed to increase formal employment in the private sector and provide decent jobs for all women and men, especially from disadvantaged groups. In Argentina, a registration programme promotes the formalization and financial inclusion of domestic workers in private homes; since its launch in September 2021, more than 45,000 new workers have been registered with the Federal Public Revenue Administration. In Mexico, the Sectoral Work and Social Welfare Programme (2020–2024) registers domestic workers with the Mexican Social Security Institute. In Tunisia, the Law on Domestic Workers (2021) regulates contractual relations between domestic workers and employers and ensures the right to decent work and social protection, including a guaranteed minimum wage, a maximum of 48 working hours per week and a weekly rest day.

### **C. Women's entrepreneurship**

26. Entrepreneurship continues to be a focus for empowering women in the economy. Most reporting States have developed or strengthened national plans and strategies to boost women's entrepreneurship and incubate and launch women's enterprises (Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Gambia, Ghana, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Panama, the Philippines, Tunisia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates). A few countries can dedicate significant funds to cultivating women's enterprises. Australia is offering \$A52.2 million in grants for the Boosting Female Founders Initiative through 2024–2025 with amounts between \$A25,000 and \$A480,000 to women-owned and led start-ups to expand their businesses into domestic and global markets, while the United Arab Emirates has pledged 50 million United Arab Emirates dirhams (AED) to the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative Fund and encourages the private sector to increase women's leadership and decision-making towards at least 30 per cent women on boards of directors by 2025. Tunisia has invested 42.5 million Tunisian dinars in partnership with the Tunisian Solidarity Bank for a financing line with favourable borrowing conditions for women's enterprises.

27. Many countries are supporting training, certification and financing of women's enterprises. In Maldives, the Ministry of Economic Development provides start-up kits for women entrepreneurs and training on financial literacy and information and communications technology skills. In Türkiye, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization offers free online training to increase knowledge and skills for establishing, developing and running a business; approximately 45 per cent of participants since 2009 are women. El Salvador is supporting the technical capacity of women entrepreneurs in the textile industry. The National Women Entrepreneur Council of Mauritius supports potential and existing women entrepreneurs in the agrobusiness, handicrafts, textile and service sectors. The Dominican Republic certifies and registers women-owned and led micro, small and medium enterprises in the State Suppliers Registry; 250 enterprises are now registered, facilitating their access to public procurement.

28. In Portugal, the Enhanced Support Programme for Employment and Professional Training targets young people and the unemployed, supporting the creation and development of new businesses; when led by the underrepresented sex

in a sector, funding is increased by 30 per cent. In the Gambia, the State works with microfinance institutions to provide financial services and products to women's groups, including saving with credit unions and a women's enterprise fund. In Ghana, the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre dedicates 50 per cent of loans to women's businesses and small-scale farming. Malaysia supported over 110,000 rural women entrepreneurs from 2016 to 2021, while in Mexico, the Microfinance Fund for Rural Women authorized 200,000 microcredits between 2021 and 2022.

29. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development launched the eTrade for Women initiative in 2019 to empower women entrepreneurs in the digital economy through advocacy, capacity-building, community-building and policy dialogue. The Conference selects eTrade for women advocates from developing regions to serve as role models for the next generation of women entrepreneurs and influence policymaking at the national and global levels.

#### **D. Women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work and paid care work**

30. The COVID-19 pandemic focused global attention on the care economy and the disproportionate and increasing responsibility of women and girls for unpaid care and domestic work in households and communities and paid care work by women across the health and service sectors. About half of reporting Member States included information on initiatives related to care. Among the Governments with the resources to respond, Australia intends to invest \$A10.3 billion on childcare services in 2021–2022, supporting women to work and 1.3 million children to access early childhood education and care. Approximately \$A9.9 billion was allocated through the child care subsidy, a means-tested payment to childcare providers that substantially reduces out-of-pocket childcare costs, in particular for low and middle-income families. The Philippines launched the Building Constituency for the Recognition and Valuing of Women's Work for the Care Economy project in 2022 to develop capacity and awareness through online discussions and information campaigns and a whole-of-government action plan and policy package on recognizing, redistributing and reducing women's unpaid care work.

31. Paid maternity and parental leave are key mechanisms for enabling women to continue participating in the world of work and for sharing care responsibilities between parents. In 2022, Colombia passed a bill that creates shared parental leave and increases paternity leave to two weeks, with possible extension up to five weeks. The Philippines extended maternity leave benefits in 2019 to 105 days with full pay and an additional 30 days without pay, covering all women workers in the public and private sectors, including in the informal economy, regardless of civil status or legitimacy of the child; the act allows the allocation of up to seven days of the worker's maternity leave benefits to the child's father, regardless of civil status, or to an alternate caregiver in case of death, absence or incapacity of the child's father.

32. Countries are increasing their gender data and statistics capacity to support the valuation of unpaid care and domestic work in national accounts and inform policies, principally through surveys on time use and distribution of unpaid care and domestic work in the household (Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Maldives, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal and Sweden).

33. The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) published "Public investment in the care economy in the UNECE region: opportunities and challenges for gender equality in the COVID-19 recovery," which reports on UNECE member State efforts to secure and expand care investments during the pandemic response and recovery,

covering fiscal and tax policy, economic stimulus action, employment protection measures, protection of care worker income and direct support to paid care work.

34. The Global Alliance for Care, launched by the National Institute of Women in Mexico and UN-Women at the Generation Equality Forum, held in 2021, and under the Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, has 68 members, including national and local governments civil society organizations, philanthropic foundations, the private sector, and United Nations entities and multilateral organizations. The Alliance addresses the profound implications of the unequal distribution of care on gender equality and societies through the recognition, reduction, redistribution, remuneration and representation of domestic and care work and commitments to advance the care agenda by 2026.

## **E. Gender-based violence and sexual harassment**

35. Preventing and responding to violence, providing services to survivors and making public and private spaces safe for women and girls constituted the prime area of interest for virtually all reporting Member States. New laws have been enacted and innovative plans and programmes created and funded. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on Prohibition of Harassment at Work entered into force in 2021. Also in 2021, Côte d'Ivoire adopted a law to protect victims of domestic violence, rape and non-domestic sexual violence. The Labour Law passed in Mongolia in 2021 prohibits any form of harassment, violence and sexual harassment in employment and the labour relation, covering part-time work, home and remote work, and domestic work. In the Philippines, the 2019 Safe Spaces Act defines and penalizes all forms of gender-based sexual harassment committed in public spaces, including online educational and work spaces, and the Act Prohibiting the Practice of Child Marriage of 2021 penalizes the facilitation and solemnization of child marriage and the cohabitation of adults with children, empowering children through education and support networks and providing economic support to families and communities.

36. Mexico established the Comprehensive Programme to Prevent, Address, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (2021–2024). In 2020, Tunisia created an observatory for data collection and analysis to fight violence against women with effective policies and mechanisms. In Argentina, the “Accompany Programme” strengthens the economic independence of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons people in situations of gender-based violence and supported 152,089 people since its launch in 2021. Australia is investing \$A1.3 billion over the next six years under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children (2022–2032) and up to \$A261.4 million in 2021–2023 to bolster front-line support services.

37. In view of the shadow pandemic of violence that emerged with the COVID-19 crisis, countries undertook both immediate and longer-term responses. Colombia supports workplaces without sexual harassment through a digital platform using algorithms and artificial intelligence to identify, address and prevent workplace sexual harassment; in 2020–2021, 22 public and private organizations participated in the platform. The Bright Sky App used in Czechia allows victims and survivors to assess their situation and risks, obtain advice, preserve evidence of violence and connect with relevant organizations or the police. In 2021, Ghana established the Orange Support Centre and Boame Mobile Application to respond and refer victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to appropriate institutions for redress. Maldives set up a helpline in 2021 to expand services for victims and survivors of gender-based violence during the pandemic. In 2020, Mauritius launched the Lespwar mobile app with a panic button that geolocates the gender-based violence situation and alerts the police and the Department of Gender Equality and Family

Welfare. Panama also established helplines in 2020 for victims and survivors of violence. In Portugal, the “Safety in Isolation” campaign on social media, television, radio and the press, available in multiple languages including sign language, reminds victims and survivors to ask for help, informs about support services and alerts the community to be vigilant, to help and to report cases of domestic violence.

38. Several countries provided special funding and support for women’s shelters during the pandemic (Armenia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Malaysia, Sweden, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates). The Dominican Republic significantly increased funding for its Shelters and Economic Compensation for Women Victims of Violence and Foster Families of Orphans by Femicide programme; in 2021, 1,672 women, children and adolescents received protection. In El Salvador, shelters for returning migrant women in situations of gender-based violence provide essential, care and family relocation services and livelihood support. Sweden dedicated substantial funds in 2020–2021 for non-profit organizations working with women, children and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons subject to abuse and domestic violence.

39. In 2021, the World Health Organization produced “Addressing violence against women in health and multisectoral policies: a global status report,” which showed that while 80 per cent of countries have multisectoral plans of action on violence against women, only 48 per cent have health sector guidelines or protocols to shape health systems response; “Guidelines and tools to strengthen health systems response to violence against women,” which is being used by 71 countries; and with UN-Women, the RESPECT implementation package to help countries scale up evidence-based prevention.

## **F. Universal access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health**

40. Member States expanded access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, to support the mental and physical well-being of women and girls, before, during and after the COVID-19 crisis. The National Women’s Health Strategy (2020–2030) in Australia guides investments in the health and well-being of women and girls across sexual and reproductive health, preventive health and mental health. The Strategic Framework for the Development of Health Care in the Czechia until 2030 aims to reduce gender inequalities in health care, increase gender-responsive health and social services, improve working conditions of health-care workers, and increase mothers’ satisfaction with care during pregnancy, childbirth and the post-partum period. The Strategic Plan for a Comprehensive Response to Human Rights-Related Barriers to HIV and Tuberculosis Services in Ghana (2020–2024) involves adolescent girls and young women in decision-making in the national HIV response.

41. Countries invested in the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls. In 2020, Argentina passed the law on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, which allows abortion up to 14 weeks, and the law on comprehensive health care and care during pregnancy and early childhood or “1000 days plan” to reduce and prevent maternal and childhood mortality, especially for poor women, by providing direct payments and free food, milk, vaccines and medicine to pregnant people and infant children, monthly financial assistance during pregnancy and then annually for children up to three years old. Sweden set aside significant funding (2019–2022) for women’s health and maternity and neonatal care by improving staffing and skills. Burkina Faso mandated free family planning services in 2019 and 2020. Hungary expanded access and scope of screening related to sexual and

reproductive health. In Côte d'Ivoire the Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project in the Sahel increases access to sexual and reproductive health by women and adolescent girls, including voluntary family planning and maternal health, improves children's health and nutrition, and addresses child marriage and harmful practices. In the Dominican Republic, the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2020) takes a gender, intersectional, rights-based and life course perspective. In El Salvador, the National Intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Pregnancy in Girls and Adolescents (2017–2027) is being implemented in 25 priority municipalities, guaranteeing the rights and access to justice of girls and adolescents. Similarly, the Philippines is implementing a Comprehensive Action Plan to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancies (2021–2024).

42. In the context of COVID-19, Member States undertook measures to protect the health and wellbeing of women and girls in all their diversity. Argentina made recommendations to ensure access to health care for transgender and non-binary people. Bosnia and Herzegovina produced recommendations to integrate gender equality in planning, adopting and implementing decisions to fight COVID-19. In Ghana, Agenda 111 will construct and refurbish 111 health facilities to improve delivery of quality health care at district level as a lesson from COVID-19. Liberia pledged significant funding to improve the health and wellbeing of women, children and adolescents by building capacities of health providers and improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. The Philippines provided continuous essential health services, including sexual and reproductive health care and women and child protection services. Turkmenistan also ensured public clinic provision of family planning and reproductive health care. Portugal co-sponsored the joint statement on protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights and promoting gender-responsiveness in the COVID-19 crisis, which was signed by 59 Member States.

## **G. Right to education throughout the life cycle**

43. Nearly half of reporting Member States advanced the right of women and girls to education and improved the gender-responsiveness of education systems. In 2021, Argentina launched the Popular Schools for Training in Gender and Diversity, implemented by social and cultural organizations across the country. By 2026, Armenia aims to build or renovate 300 schools and 500 kindergartens and reach at least 85 per cent preschool enrolment of children aged three to five. In Ghana, the Better Life for Girls project, which ended in 2021, equipped adolescent girls with knowledge, skills and decision-making capacity, including on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. Sweden, where more women than men graduate from higher education but only 29 per cent of professors are women, has pledged to ensure that half of all newly appointed professors will be women by 2030.

44. Türkiye enabled students to continue their education remotely during COVID-19 lockdowns and school closures through the Turkish Radio and Television and Educational Information Network, the country's free digital education platform, covering pre-school through preparation for university entrance exams. Bosnia and Herzegovina issued key recommendations for continuing education in the context of COVID-19, underscoring the risks of girls and young women dropping out of school due to gender-based division of family responsibilities, where women are meant to run households and raise children.

45. The International Telecommunications Union and partners hosted 10 Moments of Girls in information and communications technology in 2021 to encourage girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and, jointly with the African Union and UN-Women, undertook the African Girls Can Code Initiative,

holding a hybrid event in 2020 with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, with 125 girls participating in person and over 2000 girls from across the continent participating remotely.

46. In 2020, the International Atomic Energy Agency launched the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme with the objective to encourage and support young women to pursue a career in nuclear-related fields and to contribute to the emergence of a new generation of women leaders in nuclear science and technology.

## **H. Conclusions and recommendations**

47. **Member States faced enormous and unprecedented challenges in implementing the resolution on women in development since the last report in 2019. Since then, the intensifying and interlinked climate, environmental and COVID-19 pandemic emergencies that have disproportionately affected women and girls across all sectors and areas of sustainable development. Extreme poverty surged for the first time in a generation, widening the gender poverty gap. Women and girls faced rising economic, social, and health insecurity, spiralling violence at home and at work, and unbearable paid and unpaid care and domestic work demands. While Governments have taken decisive and often innovative steps to meet the challenges, the response has been insufficient. Increasing inequalities between and within countries, rising debt levels and shrinking fiscal space in poor and developing countries have precluded measures of sufficient magnitude to meet the needs and priorities and fulfil the rights of women and girls. Renewed global solidarity and multilateralism are called for to create a sustainable, just and gender-equal present and future.**

48. **To achieve the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in sustainable development, in the economy and in society in the midst of climate, environmental, health and economic crises, and ensure women's rights to work and at work and women's and girls' rights to health, education and a life free of violence in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States are encouraged to consider the following measures:**

(a) **Take stock of the lessons and recommendations emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen a gender-responsive recovery and to forestall future crises;**

(b) **Integrate gender equality considerations in national sustainable development, poverty, labour market and social protection strategies and policies and COVID-19 response and recovery measures;**

(c) **Eradicate women's and girls' poverty by supporting and investing in women's jobs, incomes and livelihoods and reducing their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work;**

(d) **Achieve women's equal participation in labour markets, decision-making and leadership by addressing structural barriers and removing discriminatory laws, social norms and practices;**

(e) **Expand gender-responsive social protection floors and systems to reach all women and girls in all their diversity, to protect their present and future wellbeing and livelihoods and increase their resilience to social, economic and environmental shocks;**

(f) Ensure access by women, especially young women, to decent work and entrepreneurship, including by formalizing jobs and enterprises in the informal economy and targeted gender-responsive recovery measures;

(g) Support and invest in employment and enterprises in sectors adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially where women predominate, providing skills development, training, certification and financing;

(h) Ensure women's enjoyment of labour and human rights and eliminate gender-based discrimination at work and the gender pay gap and promote women's participation, decision-making and leadership in the public and private sectors;

(i) Ratify and implement the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201), the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206) of the International Labour Organization;

(j) Invest in the care economy and take action to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work in the household, and between households and the state, and reward and represent women's paid work by expanding high-quality care services, jobs and infrastructure, enacting maternity and parental leave policies and providing allowances and social protection to carers and care workers;

(k) Enact and implement laws, policies and programmes to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and harassment in public and private spaces, including the workplace, create safe physical and virtual workplaces, and put in place effective prevention and response measures, essential services and remedies for victims and survivors, complaints procedures and perpetrator accountability measures in line with the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206) of the International Labour Organization;

(l) Promote and protect women's and girls' right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights;

(m) Ensure girls complete their education, encourage girls who left during the pandemic to return and support girls who were already out of school to complete education and attain work, with targeted attention to the needs and priorities of girls and young women who are not in employment, education or training;

(n) Invest in education, training and skills development through the life course that reduces gender-based sectoral and occupational segregation and promotes women in non-traditional employment and sectors, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

(o) Eliminate laws, social norms and practices in all areas and at all levels that discriminate against women and girls, engaging national and local authorities, community leaders and men and boys;

(p) Improve the collection, analysis and use of gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex, income, race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, migration status, disability status, location and other characteristics on decent work and entrepreneurship, social protection, workers in the informal economy, sexual and reproductive health, education and sexual and gender-based violence.



**49. The United Nations system and other international organizations are encouraged to support Member States to implement, monitor and assess the foregoing recommendations at all levels.**

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