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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Network of Women's Non- governmental Organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Direct and Indirect Effects of Economic Sanctions on the Health of the Iranian People

The extensive and ongoing international sanctions imposed by the United States of America since 2011, with support from other countries, have had significant direct and indirect effects on the health of the Iranian people. Direct sanctions, often through the embargo on consumer goods, intermediaries, and capital goods in the medical equipment sector, have led to a considerable reduction in international trade activities. This includes decreased imports of pharmaceutical raw materials, medical devices, and parts, ultimately reducing access to advanced medical technologies.

These sanctions have imposed annual costs of billions of dollars on various sectors of the country, including health, causing a negative economic growth rate of -8% in the early years of implementation.

Indirect sanctions, such as oil sanctions, resulted in poverty for about 10% of Iranian households during their first phase. Rural, young, low-educated households, those employed in the private sector, border residents, and households with low to middle income experienced the highest poverty rates during this period, leading to general impoverishment and increased mortality, especially among patients with specific diseases.

The effects of these sanctions improved significantly during 2015 to 2017, with economic growth reaching +14% due to the signing of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Additionally, sanctions adversely affected health indicators, including mortality rates at various ages, cancer incidence, the prevalence of certain chronic and severe diseases like diabetes, economic health indicators such as out-of-pocket expenses, and the deepening of health inequalities, resulting in widespread health inequity.

The banking system, heavily impacted by sanctions, has disrupted transactions with pharmaceutical and medical equipment companies, directly affecting public health due to medication and equipment shortages. Moreover, foreign financial institutions and commercial companies have refused to provide goods and services to the Islamic Republic of Iran out of fear of financial and reputational repercussions, further complicating health supplies.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has suffered significant financial losses due to a lack of access to banking communications and U.S. dollars in trade activities, causing serious disruptions and delays in securing essential goods, including food, medicine, medical equipment, and other materials. The sanctions have also severely limited the Islamic Republic of Iran's participation in international collaborations, membership payments to international organizations, access to financial opportunities, and participation in academic, cultural, and sports activities.

The imposed trade and financial restrictions have negatively impacted the labor market and the lives of Iranians abroad, who face challenges in transferring money for tuition and living expenses, leading to increased mental health issues among the diaspora. The instability of the sanctions regime has created an insecure job market, pushing people into informal economies without social protection.

Medical services have faced logistical challenges since 2011, with periodic shortages of critical drugs and medical equipment essential for treating rare diseases like certain cancers, thalassemia, hemophilia, MS, butterfly disease, autism, and specific types of diabetes. Despite claims that humanitarian exemptions protect these supplies, the reality is that financial, commercial, shipping, and insurance restrictions have significantly reduced access.

Re-imposed sanctions in 2018 brought new trade and financial restrictions, further complicating agricultural production due to the lack of seeds, fertilizers, and equipment, leading to food price inflation. According to the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture, these sanctions disrupted the supply of at least 10 million tons of agricultural imports, jeopardizing food security and violating the right to adequate food. Household expenses increased by 64% between 2017 and 2019, altering dietary patterns and reducing food consumption among low and middle-income families.

Academics and medical professionals face difficulties paying membership fees and attending international conferences, limiting their access to online platforms and participation in international sessions, workshops, and educational programs. The unilateral sanctions have restricted access to information, negatively impacting the right to education, academic freedom, cultural rights, and non-discrimination.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, hosting over 5 million migrants and refugees, mostly Afghans, requires humanitarian aid. Sanctions have impaired the government's ability to support this population and hindered humanitarian actors' efforts to provide essential goods and services.

Unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran are inconsistent with international legal principles and constitute coercive measures condemned by the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly. The Islamic Republic of Iran has endured over 40 years of economic sanctions, exceeding the capacity of any single country, severely impacting the economy, humanitarian conditions, and people's lives, including access to essential goods, services, and infrastructure.

Despite UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan's calls for:

- a) the removal of all unilateral measures against the Islamic Republic of Iran that lack UN Security Council authorization,
- b) the elimination of restrictions on trade, financial payments, and the delivery of essential goods,
- c) assurance that the Islamic Republic of Iran can pay international organization dues and conduct diplomatic and consular missions and,
- d) the United States of America's cessation of the national emergency regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran,

no actions have been taken, and the country continues to face extensive sanctions, threatening public health, food security, economy, and employment, resulting in widespread poverty, insecurity, and corruption. The economic consequences of these sanctions fail to match the purported aim of punishing the government, instead disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups.
