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## Commission on the Status of Women

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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 Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Thirty years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, many of the issues and directions it highlights remain relevant. While gains have been achieved, progress has been slow, interrupted by crises, and new and emerging challenges need to be accounted for in regions of the Global South where more women live in poverty, and are threatened by violence and by the effects of climate change.

### **Advancing women's economic and political empowerment continues to demand significant focus**

Across many countries of the Global South, barriers to access to credit and other financial services still significantly limit women's opportunities for economic empowerment. Governments, in this context, should work with financial institutions to support where necessary the delivery of tailored gender-sensitive financial services, such as low-collateral loans and flexible repayment options.

Progress on women's land ownership also needs to be accelerated. The International Land Coalition reports that, at this time, less than 15 per cent of the world's landowners are women. While 164 countries legally recognise women's right to land ownership, only 52 guarantee this in practice. It is critical for countries where it is necessary to update laws that prevent women's access to land; where laws exist to safeguard women's land rights, governments should renew their commitment to their implementation.

Finally, women's limited political participation remains a key issue across the Global South. Most countries are far from gender parity in appointments, and political violence – which has now significantly progressed into the digital space – is a strong concern. It is essential for governments to prioritise the development and implementation of the policies and other measures needed to create an environment that enables the full and equal political participation of women.

### **The development of strong care systems needs to be prioritised**

The Beijing Declaration acknowledges the unequal distribution of care as a key obstacle to women's full and equal socio-economic empowerment. Still, today, the contribution of care activities remains undervalued. The current context calls for the question of care to be urgently brought to the front of policy priorities, including beyond gender platforms, in areas such as climate action and financing.

As highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic, women play a key role in community resilience in times of crisis, disproportionately assuming responsibility for a wide range of activities crucial to the wellbeing of current and future populations. Without the necessary resources and systems in place, intense pressure is exercised on households, with serious implications for gender equality, but also health, nutrition, education, and the intergenerational transmission of poverty. This remains particularly pertinent in all contexts affected by extreme weather events, and conflict.

Mobilising the necessary resources to strengthen care systems is a core concern across many countries of the Global South. In the lead up to the 4th International Financing for Development Conference and in the coming years, the Commission on the Status of Women can take a leading role in driving the commitments needed for a financial architecture that supports and promotes adequate investments in care systems.

Further, to support the development of strong care systems, governments should commit to the implementation of labour policies that guarantee decent wages, working conditions, and social protections to care workers; promote investments in the care sector; as well as meaningfully support, financially and through adequate services, the vital role of unpaid caregivers.

### **Digitalisation brings forward opportunities, as well as new challenges**

The place of digital technologies is one of the major changes in the landscape since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Closing the gender gap in meaningful digital access and use is a pressing priority to ensure the full and equal economic, social and political participation of all women and girls.

Movement restrictions imposed during the pandemic further exacerbated, and as such highlighted, the gender-based digital divide, as well as its impacts on women's socio-economic exclusion.

As part of the follow-up on the Pact for the Future, and building upon the Outcome Document of its 68th Session, the Commission on the Status of Women can play a leading role in reviewing progress on closing the digital gender gap and driving the implementation of commitments that support addressing the barriers to full and equal digital participation for all women and girls.

Addressing the divide in meaningful digital access and use remains a priority. The challenges include limited digital and electrical infrastructure, connectivity, affordability of access and devices, as well as context-specific socio-cultural barriers that require tailored solutions.

Governments should commit to strengthening partnerships with the private sector to put in place measures that enable the provision of an affordable internet connection to all, as well as widespread access to devices that can support meaningful online activity. This may involve free access and devices for students who need it, measures to reduce tax on internet plans, regulatory changes to further enable local action, or designing data plans suitable for those who are paid on a daily, weekly or fortnightly basis.

Gender disparities in digital capacities – and leadership in digital innovation – are also a key concern. To address this, governments should include in their plans the development of basic digital skills for all into the primary and secondary school curriculum, as well as the adequate upgrading of school facilities. Further efforts are also needed to support the development of relevant digital capabilities for women and girls who are not enrolled in school. There, states may partner with private companies to put in place needs-based training programmes aimed at fostering basic digital literacy, as well as an understanding of the ways to use digital platforms to, for example, support business activity. Finally, policies and incentives to strengthen the enrollment of women and girls in technology-based tertiary education programmes will be necessary.

Finally, online violence is a key driver of women and girls' digital exclusion. A strong framework to protect all users – in all languages – against existing and emerging forms of tech-enabled abuse, supported by measures for the accountability of the companies regulating digital platforms and tools, is necessary to protect women and girls from the many forms of tech-enabled gender-based violence. This should be a priority for international cooperation.

**Strengthening the role of the Commission on the Status of Women to address remaining and new priorities for the achievement of gender equality**

Across contexts, researchers highlight the need to mainstream gender equality into policies, and budgets. At the international level, efforts are being made in the direction of further integrating gender equality into existing and new processes. The recently adopted Pact for the Future, for example, explicitly placed reducing inequalities and the achievement of gender equality as a foundation for its commitments. Still, the aspiration for further coordination between multilateral spaces is often highlighted.

In 2025, decision-makers will convene for the 4th International Financing for Development Conference, the World Summit for Social Development, among other events. The following year will include the Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktaking Moment.

The Commission on the Status of Women plays a critical role in convening a broad group of stakeholders to drive progress towards gender equality objectives. To ensure the development of policies that support the achievement of gender equality in all relevant sectors, and accelerate progress on gender equity, the annual sessions of the Commission and their preparatory stages can provide a strong platform to build commitment towards key gender equality priorities in the context of other ongoing processes – including providing the resources needed for women’s economic empowerment, strengthening care systems, and closing the digital gender divide.

Finally, think tanks of the Global South, along with other civil society organisations, have a significant role to play in ensuring that the deliberations at the annual sessions, and their outcomes, align with pressing priorities across their countries. The Commission on the Status of Women should re-commit to fostering an environment that enables strong engagement of various stakeholder constituencies in the preparatory processes, and the meaningful representation of their positions.

The Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo submits this statement to the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, as hosts of the Southern Voice network, which seeks to bring key priorities from the Global South to the centre of relevant global agendas. The statement is based on the collective knowledge of Southern Voice member institutes across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

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