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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 Mediators Beyond Borders, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

On the occasion of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (“CSW”), Mediators Beyond Borders International (“MBBI”) wishes to highlight the importance of achieving gender equality in a world facing polycrisis. We emphasize the need for a social cohesion approach in peacebuilding, to recognize the intersectional impact of violent conflict on women, focus on systemic change through adapting the feminist peacebuilding frameworks and importance of using an equity lens to empower women’s leadership and meaningful role in all aspects of peace building.

Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI) is a non-governmental organization of people building peace with conflict experts spread across the globe, including women and gender diverse persons. MBBI believes that people-centered conflict resolution and building local capacity for peace, which engages women, is critical in bridging the gender gaps and ensuring safety at all levels. Investing in women’s leadership and negotiation skills will propel positive change by equipping life-long skills that apply to many contexts, including in public and private spheres, particularly in a world coping with the paradigm shifts brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, facing the polycrisis of protracted conflicts, the rise in authoritarianism, white supremacy, the global decline of democracy, historically largest migration of human populations across the continents and the climate emergency.

Through initiatives like the International Peace Training Institute (IPTI), MBBI has developed cohorts around the globe, whose members are knowledgeable and skilled at actively addressing conflict transformation on the local, national, and international levels. It includes a comprehensive Trauma-Informed Peacebuilding (TIP) curriculum that focuses training and coaching practitioners on being trauma-informed in their work. IPTI has provided free, year-long training and coaching to hundreds of women, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to make meaningful contributions to peace processes. These women have created a positive ripple effect on thousands more by creating programs, facilitating mediations, and leading peacebuilding efforts in their own communities.

Thirty years have passed since the Beijing Declaration (“The Declaration”) was adopted by 189 UN member nations, and the journey toward women’s and girls’ empowerment, equality, and human rights protection has proven far more complex than anticipated. While significant strides have been made, numerous setbacks and challenges have hindered the full realization of the Declaration’s goals, making progress uneven and at times elusive. Persistent gender inequality remains a significant barrier to achieving sustainable peace and just societies.

At MBBI, we believe that the full and effective participation of women across all sectors addressed in the Declaration’s twelve critical concerns is not just desirable but essential for achieving global peace and security. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, along with subsequent resolutions, underscores the critical need for women to be central to peace and security efforts. MBBI further emphasizes that world peace and security are not only human rights issues but also gender rights issues. When 50 per cent of the world’s population is excluded from influencing policy and decisions on global peace and security, the efforts of member nations are significantly weakened.

As mediators and experts in conflict resolution and transformation, we understand that those in power are often resistant to sharing it. Power imbalances, concentrated among a select few, fuel ongoing conflict and undermine peace and security. We therefore urge member nations to take all necessary steps to shape and act on policies to redistribute power to women and girls. This includes enacting

legislative and policy reforms, ensuring women's leadership in public office, guaranteeing equal representation at negotiation tables, and investing in capacity-building for women's leadership skills. Such actions will not only empower women but also enhance their influence in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, embedding a gender-sensitive approach into the framework and outcomes of these goals.

To address the Declaration's twelve critical concerns, women and girls should look to UNSCR 1325 for guidance on how to move forward. The resolution's four pillars – participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery – provide a comprehensive framework to involve women at all levels in addressing issues such as climate change, poverty, health, economic advancement, and violence against women. We call on all nations to integrate the framework of UNSCR 1325 into the strategic plan of the Declaration, reaffirming peace and security as vital components for realizing its objectives.

The twelve critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration addressing women and poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, women in armed conflict, economic participation, power and decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media representation, environmental involvement, and the rights of the girl child – together create a comprehensive framework for advancing gender equality, empowering women and girls, and ensuring their full participation in all aspects of society.

MBBI underscores that the pervasive issue of gender inequality continues to hinder progress towards global peace and development. It is the barrier in achieving SDG 5 goal of gender equality by 2030 and we call for action with significant structural changes. The slow or regressive progress in key areas of women's rights, such as reproductive health and climate justice issues adversely impacting women and girls is particularly concerning. MBBI calls for systemic changes to address these inequalities by advocating for legal reforms, gender-responsive budgeting and societal shifts that promote gender equality. MBBI reiterates the need for policies that break down the barriers preventing women from fully participating in peace processes. These systemic barriers include gender discrimination in societal cultural norms, economic structures, and legal frameworks, which prevent women from accessing leadership positions and decision-making roles.

MBBI recommends the international community to focus on the following actionable recommendations that reflect our ongoing commitment to advancing gender equality and sustainable peace through women's leadership and participation:

Align Social Cohesion and Peacebuilding Strategies with Gender Equality Goals

Take social cohesion approach in peacebuilding highlighting the need for strong societal relationships to reduce conflict and promote sustainable peace. All peace and security strategies should be developed with a gender perspective that reflects the diverse roles of women in conflict. Governments and international bodies must ensure that women are included in all stages of peace processes, from negotiations to implementation.

Recognize Intersectionality and Equity to promote Women's Empowerment

Recognizing intersectionality is crucial for understanding women's roles in peacebuilding. Empowerment of women and girls must use equity lens and address economic, educational, and social inequities. Power-sharing across gender identities and borders is vital. Women's roles in peace processes need to be meaningful, not just symbolic as their inclusion boosts the likelihood of lasting peace.

Systemic change through adapting the Feminist Peacebuilding Frameworks

Focus on feminist peacebuilding frameworks for transforming structural power asymmetries by addressing the deep-seated inequalities that shape societies, advocating for systemic change to create more inclusive and equitable environments. These feminist frameworks delve into the structural drivers of feminization of poverty and economic recovery, offering a more holistic and critical perspective. We emphasize the need for openness to diverse perspectives and the redistribution of power to ensure all voices are valued in the pursuit of lasting peace. Ongoing investments in training and capacity building are essential to empower women as leaders and mediators in conflict resolution. This includes providing specialized training for women in rural areas and those affected by conflict, as well as promoting mentorship and peer-support programs. It requires implementing gender-responsive financing to ensure the unique needs of women's capacity building efforts to ensure balancing of power and a fair distribution of natural resources.

Address Gender Inequality in Legal and Economic Structures

The governments of the state parties affiliated to the UN should enact legal reforms that promote gender equality in providing equal state protection for women irrespective of their immigration status, ensuring their safety and full political and economic participation, such as equal pay laws, women's reproductive rights and maternity leave policies, and legislative framework of national laws to reflect the international obligations to protect the rights and dignity of migrating and cross border families. These reforms should also address gender discrimination in societal norms and legal frameworks.

Leverage Technology for Gender Equality

Investment in technology and innovation is crucial to enhancing women's participation in peace processes. National and international communities and their governments should support STEM education for women and girls, and improve access to technology in rural areas. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize the importance of cybersecurity in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including the need to address technology-facilitated violence against women.
