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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, 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](#).



Statement

The Millennium Development Goals report of 2013 reveals a mixed pattern of successes and failures, improvements and challenges, innovations and obstacles. The Millennium Development Goals have been premised on a flawed concept of development based on the dominant gross domestic product growth model and were not embedded in a human rights framework. Structural and systemic changes are the real challenges to be addressed now and into the future and the bedrock of a transformative agenda “leaving no one behind”. Human well-being, the dignity of each person, gender equality, sufficiency and an economics based on the common good is called for.

The current situation of inequalities, including gender inequality, violence against women and girls, discrimination and unsustainable models of development, must be challenged and addressed. Globalization has facilitated the concentration of power in the hands of transnational companies and vested elite interests. Transformation demands a shift towards just and sustainable societies and livelihoods, the upholding of human rights and dignity and gender equality, and away from the concentration of money and power in the hands of a few.

The goals, target and indicators of the Millennium Development Goals have not addressed systemic and structural change. Goals in and of themselves will never initiate a paradigm shift or lead to transformation. The challenge is how to choose and design strategies that will seed transformative dialogue leading to changes in mindset and systemic change. A significant achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is the knowledge gained that these goals in themselves do not address systemic issues. The challenge is to engage in systemic rather than issues-based thinking. Mindsets and systems are interlinked. Change happens in the doing. This analysis is particularly important with regard to gender equality where the mindset is one of patriarchy, hierarchy and power over, control and obvious violations of human rights. Millennium Development Goal 3, on promoting gender equality and empowering women, did not address the systemic issues.

How can power relations be democratized? How can the divide between men and women, boys and girls, rulers and ruled, humanity and nature, rich and poor, North and South be bridged? The living out by each person and each State of the fundamental values as outlined in the Millennium Declaration — freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility — is imperative. How do we promote person-centred, community-centred and Member State-centred approaches working towards fairness, as opposed to creating hierarchies of power and control over person, communities and even Member States? What processes are necessary to develop relational equality between women and men? How do we move to a relational understanding of economy situated within society and nature: one humanity, one economy in one planet, with social justice at its heart?

The Millennium Development Goal framework for gender equality and women’s empowerment has not achieved systemic change for girls and women. Girls and women continue to be enslaved by patriarchy. The persistence of patriarchal systems and mindsets can be seen in the range of violence perpetrated against girls and women around the world. The Millennium Development Goals were remiss in not addressing violence. Violence against girls and women is a relational issue. Patriarchal and hierarchical systems, wherever they exist, act in

violent and exploitative ways against girls and women, against vulnerable communities both within and across borders and in exploitation practices against Mother Earth.

Against the conceptual background presented above, Good Shepherd Sisters in 72 countries are addressing the human dignity and human rights of girls, women and communities vulnerable to extreme poverty, violence, labour and sexual exploitation. An example from Phuket, Thailand, mirrors multiple situations around the world. Migrants from Myanmar struggle daily to survive a life of abject poverty. The majority do not have visas or work permits. This makes them vulnerable to exploitative labour practices, intimidation and bribery attempts by locals and potential victims of human traffickers. They are informally employed in the most difficult, hazardous and underpaid activities, such as fish processing and construction. They live in makeshift houses built in the middle of open-air dumping sites without water or sanitation and there is no access to basic services such as education and health care.

The project addressing these issues is multi-dimensional, providing:

- Basic literacy and nutritional support for children and adolescents between 6 and 17 years of age;
- Vocational training and job-seeking support for 40 women migrants;
- Health-care assistance through community nursing services for 500 migrants;
- Human rights workshops on how to research, monitor and report on human rights violations both locally and internationally, with a special focus on human trafficking and the rights of migrants and labourers.

We are increasingly aware that such projects, while addressing individual need, do not in fact bring about systemic change and are constantly threatened by lack of financial resources, exploitative profit-making business practices, denial of human rights and trafficking of girls and women for sexual exploitation.

Recommendations

Acceleration in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved now by:

- Reallocating resources;
- Cutting down on military expenditures and redirecting them to the Millennium Development Goals;
- Addressing the debt issue. (According to data from the World Bank, in 2010 alone, developing countries paid out \$184 billion on debt service, or about three times the annual resources required for the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals);
- Implementing and allocating a financial transaction tax for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- Honouring official development assistance already pledged but not paid;
- Implementing the full spectrum of girls' and women's human rights according to international human rights mechanisms and agreements, including the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;

- Implementing Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#), [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1889 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2011\)](#) and [2106 \(2013\)](#) on preventing all forms of violence against girls and women;
- Implementing International Labour Organization recommendation No. 202 on national floors of social protection, the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights;
- Implementing the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Moving towards the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals can be achieved by:

- Initiating and continuing conversations about the systemic and structural drivers of inequality — patriarchy, hierarchy, dominance, power and control — and encouraging and supporting the development of innovative systems to address dysfunctional systems;
- Gathering new data based on the reality of people's lives, especially women and girls, to address the intersectionality of gender inequality with other inequalities. Having two stand-alone goals: one on gender equality and one on inequalities. Ensuring that targets, indicators and policies address the root causes of these inequalities and are mainstreamed into all sustainable development goals;
- Creating national and international structures to ensure that girls and women are equal partners at the decision-making table to address a just, equitable and sustainable development agenda.

The statement is supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Dominican Leadership Conference, Edmund Rice International, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, Partnership for Global Justice, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Salesian Missions, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, Sisters of Charity Federation and UNANIMA International.