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Statement submitted by Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, 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

Women and their economic empowerment — challenges in Argentina

Argentina's economic situation is one where the gap between the richest and the poor and destitute has widened in the past twenty years, along with a surge in the number of poor and destitute persons. Women and children are overrepresented within the ranks of the poor.

In recent years, the country did not have official figures on poverty and destitution, because such figures were not officially produced. Instead, groups of private consultants and universities had to be relied upon to provide such assessments. The information normally used was that calculated by the Social Debt Observatory of the Universidad Católica Argentina. Official data were released once again in September 2016, and will be published regularly.

In that context, it is particularly challenging to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 1 on ending poverty. Policies adopted should be linked to macroeconomic and tax policy. It is important to ensure that any cuts to public spending do not affect the funding for equality policies. Given that Argentina has signed up to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in which gender equality is a key goal, this is an opportunity for economic policy to ensure protection for gender equality funding. In this regard, it is advisable to earmark budget headings for gender equality in order to guarantee the allocations.

This should go hand in hand with encouraging and training women and women's organizations to participate in devising and formulating economic policy and to be involved in monitoring its implementation. The State has a duty and an obligation to recognize and guarantee women's economic rights, which promote their autonomy. It should do so for all women, in all their diversity, as well as taking associated education, employment, sociocultural and legal measures. It is particularly necessary to attend to the most vulnerable groups in society, such as indigenous, Afrodescendent and migrant women, women living with disabilities or with HIV, and those from the lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. The female indigenous population should be included in development investments with a view to achieving a sustainable economy. This group's knowledge regarding medicinal plants and food diversity, food production and processing techniques, and other areas including textile production, should be leveraged.

Women's access to information and communications technology should be improved, by expanding and facilitating women's training in such technology — including by promoting university technology training.

In this sense, improving women's access to formal employment and complying with the International Labour Organization Convention No. 100 on equal pay for equal work should be ensured. However, this will be impossible without a change in who is responsible for domestic work and unpaid care, as these tasks fall exclusively to women and represent the main factor affecting women's careers in Argentina. The situation has worsened since the 1990s, when structural adjustment policies introduced by the Government shrank and almost eliminated the State's

shared responsibility with families and society for the care of children, the sick, those with disabilities and older adults. As well as promoting men's and women's responsibility and making those responsibilities equal, the State should take on its own share of responsibility by restoring support through social programmes.

Although Argentina ratified the International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 and adopted legislation to recognize domestic work as formal work, there is still a need to disseminate the legislation, support employers and — mainly female — domestic workers so that they can benefit from the law, and regularize the work of the significant part of the female population performing such tasks.

One aspect that needs to be developed is that of access by urban and rural women to financial services, particularly in areas far from urban centres, by creating control mechanisms for the operations of the relevant entities.

The Government of Argentina faces the challenge of achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 1 on ending poverty, as well as others on improving the economic situation while guaranteeing a proper redistribution of economic benefits. This is the debt that the State owes to women, and the debt has grown since the 1990s. It is time to overcome this, and to that end it is crucial to adopt a tax policy that reduces the unequal distribution of national income. We are certain that the slowdown in economic growth, the volatile macroeconomic conditions and the scale of external debt are not sufficient reasons to justify a lack of progress in equality between men and women.

As stated above, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are an opportunity to advance towards equality. That requires the economy and both macro- and microeconomic policies to be seen through “equality lenses” and to be shared with and assessed by women's organizations.
