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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 The US Women's Caucus, Inc., 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

The US Women's Caucus is honored to present this written statement as our first since gaining consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. We are an alliance of US feminists engaged with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and we collaborate to advance human rights and gender equity for women and girls worldwide.

While this is our first official statement to a United Nations body, the Caucus as a whole and the members of our Caucus individually have participated informally in many sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We are committed to the principles of multilateral collaboration and work for constructive participation in the United Nations by the United States government.

Where's the Promised Progress?

Thirty years ago, 189 countries endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action, and 189 countries have also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Despite those hopeful intentions, no country has yet achieved equal rights for women. According to United Nations estimates, at the current pace of progress it is projected that it will take:

- 300 years to attain goal of global equality for women
- 286 years to bridge the gaps in legal protection and discriminatory laws
- 140 years for equal representation in leadership in the workplace
- 40 - 47 years to reach gender parity in national parliaments

This shameful record highlights an urgent need for all states to review priorities and strengthen efforts for women. Clearly much remains to be done.

Ensuring that women have equitable access to all levels of justice—whether at home, in the workplace, or within their communities—is essential to achieving genuine equality.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is the foundation for enhancing the rights of women. Now is the time for each State that ratified the Convention to honor their commitments to women and girls.

The US Women's Caucus recommends the following actions by United Nations member states to advance access to justice for women and girls.

Ensuring Justice in the Home

- Ensure that laws governing marriage, family, divorce, financial support, and child custody are fair and free from discrimination against women. Guarantee that rules of property and inheritance do not discriminate against widows, single or older women.

- Respect the right of every woman to make her own decisions about her health, her body and her reproductive care. Strengthen constitutional protections for abortion and prohibit prosecution of self-managed abortions, miscarriage, or stillbirth.
- Enact and enforce legislation addressing child marriage setting minimum age of 18 and strengthen laws that protect women and girls from domestic violence, and broadening women's access to legal assistance and social support services, including for racial and ethnic minorities, Indigenous and migrant women, and women with disabilities.

Ensuring Justice in the Labor Force

- Implement and rigorously enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination and anti-harassment hiring policies, while actively addressing and seeking to eliminate the persistent average wage gap of 20–25%.
- Offer flexible work schedules as well as adequately paid maternity and family leave, while maintaining benefits during leave to support women's workforce participation and encourage better family health.
- Invest more vigorously in affordable, quality childcare to boost economic growth by the increased participation of women in the workforce.
- Recognize the vital role women play in providing unpaid labor within the economy. Support caregivers with fair compensation, and enable care during non-traditional hours to support shifting workforce patterns. Enact policies that support a cultural shift toward shared caregiving and align childcare, paid leave, and flexible work hours with gender justice goals.
- Encourage the inclusion of women in positions of authority and establish pathways to support advancement into leadership roles.
- Guarantee all women and girls equal access to education and technical training, including STEM and vocational programs, to unlock opportunities for higher-paying jobs. Educated women will be better able to recognize and claim their civil and legal rights.

Ensuring Justice within Civil Society

- Ensure that women and girls of all ages, races, ethnic groups as well as vulnerable minority groups such as Indigenous, migrant and disabled women, are protected and given equal access to education, legal protections and social services. Too often these groups are marginalized and denied their rights and equal opportunities afforded others.
- Ensure that members of the lesbian, gay, and transgender community are recognized and protected from discrimination and harassment. Protection should begin in schools with awareness training for students and faculty of unique needs for the students and with the creation of safe spaces and special services to ensure positive educational experiences for all students.

- Protect and ensure access to the full range of quality, affordable medical services including access to sexual and reproductive care for women of all ages, races, and ethnicities, with special attention to pregnant women, women with disabilities, and women in rural areas whose needs are often overlooked and underserved.
- Expand the legal and regulatory frameworks and standardize the monitoring of gender-based violence online. Since women now constitute 99% of the victims of non-consensual distribution of intimate imagery and digital forgery, governments need to provide more protection and accountability from perpetrators. Globally 85% of women have reported witnessing online violence against women, with young girls being disproportionately targeted. Cyberstalking is an enormous problem for women and girls, with half of cyberstalking victims being young people ages 9-17.
- Strengthen online victim protection service by giving providers specialized training in digital safety, legal aid and trauma-informed medical care. Increase capacity building for judges, healthcare providers, and law enforcement for better victim support.
- Increase protection for vulnerable groups as migrant and Indigenous women face heightened levels of domestic violence and femicide. Among the poorest paid in the workforce, they are often the main targets for trafficking and sexual abuse. Too often women do not know their rights and crimes go unreported or worse, ignored by authorities. National femicide observatories, with data disaggregation by race, ethnic group, and other characteristics, would raise the profile of lethal violence against women and create political will to prevent gender-based violence.
- Create comprehensive protocols for sex trafficking victim protection and increase funding for survivor services, including shelters, legal aid, healthcare, and vocational training.
- Create uniform statutes of limitations for sex crimes and ensure victims are not prosecuted for crimes committed while they were victims of sex trafficking. Provide incarceration record expungement procedures for sex trafficking victims. Increase and improve training and technical assistance for prosecutors and judges dealing with victims of trafficking.

Ensuring Equitable Political Participation

- Support campaign finance reform, party parity initiatives, and more stringent safety guarantees for women leaders and candidates - both offline and online - to strengthen women's participation in government and public life.

Ensuring Comprehensive Data Collection on Gender

- Develop and expand disaggregated data systems to identify progress and deficiencies. Only 26% of member states currently have comprehensive systems to track resource allocations for gender equality.

- Expand disaggregated data collection not only by sex, but also by marginalized minority populations such as Indigenous people, racial and ethnic groups, and gender non-conforming people whose needs are often overlooked or ignored for lack of precise data. Such data can be used to examine and identify root causes of marginalization in education, resources and job opportunities.
- Mandate that data collection be updated to include technology facilitated gender-based harassment and violence online, with standardized definitions to ensure legal and research clarity, provide consistency across jurisdictions, and improve law enforcement responses.

Intensifying Support for Women's Rights at the United Nations

- True justice requires women's inclusion at all levels of decision making the United Nations. All member states, particularly the five founding members, should honor all parts of the United Nations Charter as well as their own previous treaty commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by reinforcing their support women's rights within their own countries. States must also honor those commitments by continuing to support women's rights within the United Nations system during the crucial discussion about United Nations reform now taking place.

We believe along with many other members of civil society that women should not have to wait 300 more years for equal rights. We urge the members of the Commission on the Status of Women to take forceful action to advance the rights of women and girls at their 2026 session.