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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Joint written statement* submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International, Biovision Stiftung für ökologische Entwicklung, International Alliance of Women, International Association for Religious Freedom, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation on Ageing, Make Mothers Matter, Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Graduate Women International (GWI), International Cancer Expert Corps, Latter-day Saint Charities, Mothers Legacy Project, National Alliance of Women's Organizations, Tandem Project, Widows Rights International, Women's World Summit Foundation, World Federation for Mental Health, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Climate Change and the Right to Food

Written statement submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International a non-governmental organization in general consultative status;

This statement is endorsed by NGO's in ECOSOC Status, Members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women- Geneva and its Task Force on Climate and Health:

In General Consultative Status: Biovision, International Alliance of Women, International Association for Religious Freedom, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation on Ageing, International Council of Women, Make Mothers Matter, Soroptimist, Women's Federation for World Peace, Int'l.

In Special Consultative Status: Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Graduate Women International, International Cancer Expert Corp, Latter-day Saint Charities, Mother's Legacy Project, National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Tandem Project, Widows Rights International, Women's World Summit Foundation, World Federation for Mental Health.

The right to food is a human right recognized under international law that provides entitlements to individuals to access to adequate food and to the resources that are necessary for the sustainable enjoyment of food security. The right to food places legal obligations on States to overcome hunger and malnutrition and realize food security for all.[1]

Consistently on the rise since 2015, 2.3 billion people in the world (29.3%) were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021. Hunger and malnutrition are huge deterrents to fundamental physical and mental health which impact multiple generations. Consider the horrific effects of food insecurity and lack of nutritious food causing malnutrition on children under five years old. 2020 statistics from UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank show 45.5 million children wasted (low weight for height). 149.2 million stunted (low height for age), and 38.9 million overweight but undernourished. The causes of child malnutrition are multiple and complex, and the consequences are life-lasting.

Despite circumstances of poverty, conflict, extreme climate events, and so forth, we believe that everyone has the right to nutritious food, access to clean water, quality education, and healthcare, especially women and the children they care for. And the right to food is interdependent with and essential to these other rights. A mother denied access to adequate nutritious food will have a malnourished baby, even if she has prenatal care. Education or training provides women the skills to produce nutritious food and have the knowledge and capability to create a healthy diet. Lack of nutritious food is particularly devastating for very young children as it affects their physical and cognitive development- irreversibly. Without nutritious food, undernourished children struggle to learn. Without safe water to drink and for food preparation, a woman's right to nutritious food is unattainable.

Women are most often the caretakers of home and family that must sustain the rising generation of this world with healthy bodies and intelligent minds. According to the FAO,

women produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production. Kofi Annan said, "When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life."^[ii]

In many low-and middle-income countries, the majority of people who make their living within the food system; farmers, processors, cooks, vendors, and so forth, are women of all ages who struggle to address poverty and the rising challenges of food insecurity and hunger. Climate change and conflict have severely impacted agriculture and are also responsible for this insufficiency.

In addition, rural women and vulnerable groups such as older women, widows, migrants and others, face greater constraints than men in accessing land, technology, markets, infrastructure and services. Evidence shows that when women work interdependently with men and have the same access as men to productive resources, services, and economic opportunities, there is a significant increase in agricultural output and immediate and long term social and economic gains.

Climate change is severely impacting the food security and nutrition of the most vulnerable, increasing conditions of poverty, threatening the goal to eradicate hunger. Feeding a growing population in a context of persistent economic and social challenges and ongoing environmental degradation is a global problem. Ensuring food security and good nutrition in these conditions is a challenge that is best addressed by those most affected, the women.

In households and in communities throughout the world, the responsibility, and the capacity of providing nutritious food usually belongs to women. Women are the unpaid caregivers of people, plants, animals, soil, water, and biodiversity.

We call on governments, UN organizations to work together with civil society and non-governmental organizations to take the following actions in support of women on these challenging issues surrounding the right to food.

- Support gender sensitive and effective policies that give women equal access to equitable strategies and resources that secure access to food for them and their families.
- Ensure full participation of women in decision-making in both domestic and public sectors.
- Provide opportunities for women to receive skill training and education.

When women are adequately supported with access to resources, public infrastructures, education, and training, women join forces with community health workers and civic organizations to screen children for signs of malnutrition. Women become powerful leaders in natural resource management, farming, horticulture, and entrepreneurial work, positively impacting community and family health and economic growth. As change makers, organizers, and innovators, women on the ground adapt, promote, and build resilience to the many causes of climate change and strengthen the economic and social capacity to secure nutritious food and healthier lifestyles for all.

