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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

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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 European Women’s Lobby, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

## Statement

The European Women's Lobby, the largest coalition of women's organisations representing over 2000 organisations, commends the European Union for its ambition to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050 through the delivery of the European Green Deal.

However, we note that despite the commitment to gender-mainstreaming in the Treaties and the Gender Equality Strategy, progress is slow in integrating women's perspective into European strategies and actions, including in climate policies. We expect strong political commitments and bold actions to strengthen gender equality in the implementation of the European Green Deal initiatives and financial mechanisms, especially those related to climate change and environmental issues.

The climate crisis affects women and girls disproportionately. Severe climate disasters, exemplified by flooding and forest fires in Europe and the world this year, emphasised the urgency of including women and girls in climate and environmental policies, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. Today's environmental challenges require extensive investments. The switch from fossil fuel to less polluting energy sources like electricity, means increases in electricity prices will negatively affect people at a higher risk of poverty, namely women and children. Structural gender inequalities lead to unequal access to resources, increasing the risk of being directly impacted by environmental change. The intersection of gender, ethnic, racial, and other factors, including global social inequalities, makes climate change a feminist issue. European and international policies do not operate in a vacuum; it is critical to address the current lack of gender aspects in climate and environmental policies and to integrate a gender perspective in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and programmes. The green transition is an opportunity to make our societies, economies, and political leadership more inclusive; we must seize it immediately to ensure no woman or girl is left behind.

Mainstreaming gender in climate policies was identified as a critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action back in 1995. It was also recognised by the Parties of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on several occasions, such as the decision on Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in the Convention on Climate Change negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol, the Lima Work Programme on Gender, the Paris Agreement and the first European Union Gender Action Plan 2010-2015. We can expect a strong call for gender equality at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow in October 2021. Moreover, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Hence, we call on all policy-makers at every level to actively apply gender mainstreaming to eliminate the inequalities between women and men.

We must act now! Women and girls can experience different intersecting discriminations linked to their ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities etc. placing them in particularly vulnerable situations vis-à-vis climate change and the economic transition. Environmental measures, mechanisms, and strategies must undergo mandatory, robust gender impact assessments. We call on the European Union to undertake this in the context of the European Green Deal and to apply gender budgeting to advance gender equality and to allocate resources more efficiently.

Gender-responsive policy design and implementation require sex-disaggregated data on the differential impact of climate change and climate measures on all women and girls. More research must be conducted including on women's needs and interests in domains impacted by climate policies, such as transportation, housing, energy provision, household consumption, waste management, the labour market and much more.

We cannot combat climate change using the same economic system that resulted in the exploitation of people and natural resources, growing inequalities, and alienation of some parts of our society, particularly women. It is time for systemic change. In the patriarchal system, the oppression of women by men mirrors a similar mechanism that is used to justify the exploitation of the environment by humans. Therefore, empowering all women and girls by advancing gender equality in climate change and environmental policies requires a fundamental transformation of the current economic model. Decision-makers must acknowledge that delivering on a sustainable and just transition requires a holistic green and feminist economy: socially inclusive, ecologically sound, free from exploitation and violence, that fosters decent work for all, values unpaid care work, and redistributes resources and power equally.

Such an economic model shifts the paradigm to an economy of care putting people and the planet at the heart of policy-making. We welcome the European Commission's first female President's priority for a European Care Strategy. We urge all policy-makers at the European Union level to adopt a Care Deal that embeds care in a human rights framework and provides for decent pay and working conditions, public investments in care infrastructures and services, and shared care between women and men. We call on the European and international decision-makers to ensure climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies do not hinder women's ability to participate in and benefit from the green transition nor exacerbate the unpaid care responsibilities that predominantly fall on women.

As Europe and the world face a severe energy crisis, due partially to the high dependency on fossil fuels, energy poverty is becoming an increasing problem particularly for single-parent households, of which women represent the majority throughout the world. We call on European Union policy-makers to proactively prevent the escalation of energy poverty in implementing the revised Energy Efficiency Directive and the Renewable Energy Directive.

The transition to a green economy must provide opportunities for women. The impacts on the labour market must be analysed from a gender perspective when it comes to (un)employment, re-training, and job mobility, as well as job creation, in the green economy. Re-skilling and upskilling programmes should target specifically women and be designed in a way that caters to their specific needs. The green transition must be capitalised on to create the conditions which allow for work-life balance for both women and men, ensure equal pay, guarantee a living wage and a decent income, quality jobs, and adequate social protection. We call on the European Union decision-makers to seize this opportunity to tackle the gender pay, employment, and long-term pension gaps, and to guarantee women's economic independence. In particular, the European Union must adopt a robust Pay Transparency Directive.

The Covid-19 crisis showed that women were still under-represented in decision-making positions even when they were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, from managing an increased care burden to being on the front line. Women, in their diversity, and women's organisations must be represented in environmental and climate policy-making. Globally less than 30% of women are represented in national and global climate negotiation bodies. Increasing women's representation in climate-related ministries and in international negotiations is key in achieving gender-sensitive policies. The representation of women in business sectors relevant for climate policy, such as transport, energy, food production, green technology and innovation, is also crucial. We urge the European Union, and in particular the Council, to adopt the Women on Boards Directive which will open the way toward stronger women leadership and better representation.

Female representation in national parliaments leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies. Hence, women and girls should be recognised as powerful agents of environmental change. Their contribution in devising new solutions for climate resilience must be valued in every domain, from households and local communities, through business, politics, and education to international negotiations. We call on all governments worldwide to implement binding measures guaranteeing the equal representation of women in social, economic, and political life, including temporary mandatory quotas to achieve true parity democracies.

As climate change multiplier effect on migration is increasingly recognised, policy making processes must be sensitive to the impacts on migrant women and girls; they too, must be empowered. It is also of utmost importance to guarantee their access to healthcare, reproductive health services and to ensure their socio-economic independence and rights. We urge the European Union and international authorities to take ambitious measures to safeguard women's and girls' safety over the course of their journey, protecting them from all forms of violence, exploitation, and/or trafficking.

We must take action for the future generations of women and girls. Worldwide, young women are leading the way in holding this generation of policy-makers accountable for their actions, which will directly impact their lives tomorrow. We can no longer wait; action is urgently required now!