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Statement submitted by The Inclusivity Project, 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 Inclusivity Project calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States, United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders to recognise and address discrimination based on work and descent as a structural barrier to gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development. More than 330 million people worldwide experience discrimination based on work and descent. This discrimination is rooted in inherited status and systems of hierarchy that determine individuals' opportunities, status and treatment from birth. It continues to shape access to education, decent work, healthcare, housing, land, water, sanitation, justice and participation in public life, with particularly severe and intersecting consequences for women and girls.

Discrimination based on work and descent refers to distinctions, exclusions, restrictions or preferences based on inherited status, including caste and analogous systems, present or ancestral occupation, family, community or social origin, name, place of birth, residence, dialect or accent, which impair the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It affects diverse communities across regions, including Dalits and Burakumin in Asia; Roma and Sinti in Europe and beyond; Haratine, Osu and other communities in Africa; and Quilombola and Palenque communities in Latin America, among others. While these communities have distinct histories, identities and social contexts, they share experiences of inherited stigma, exclusion and discrimination that are reproduced across generations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits Member States to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first. This commitment cannot be fulfilled while entire communities remain invisible in national statistics, overlooked in development planning and excluded from decisions that affect their lives. Poverty among communities discriminated against based on work and descent is not simply a matter of income or individual circumstance. It is also the consequence of structural discrimination that restricts access to resources, services, opportunities and political participation. Without explicitly recognising and addressing this discrimination, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals risks leaving these communities, particularly their women and girls, behind once again.

The gendered dimensions of work- and descent-based discrimination require particular attention. Women and girls may experience discrimination both as members of stigmatised communities and because of gender-based inequalities within their families, communities and wider society. In many contexts, patriarchal norms and inherited status hierarchies reinforce restrictions on their mobility, education, marriage, sexuality, reproductive autonomy, property ownership and participation in community decision-making. Women and girls may face child and forced marriage, gender-based violence, trafficking, forced or bonded labour, hazardous and poorly paid work, and exclusion from education and essential services. Their experiences are often inadequately recognised by mainstream women's rights initiatives, while discrimination within their own communities may also limit their ability to speak out, seek justice and exercise leadership.

These inequalities contribute directly to the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Women from affected communities are frequently concentrated in insecure, informal, undervalued or hazardous employment, including work associated with inherited occupational stigma. They often undertake disproportionate unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, while facing barriers to decent work, equal pay, social protection, financial resources and economic independence. Discrimination in access to land, housing, inheritance and productive resources further limits their ability to improve their living conditions and secure livelihoods. Women and girls may also face barriers to birth registration and identity documentation, making it more difficult to access education, healthcare, social protection and justice.

Discrimination also shapes exposure to environmental and climate-related risks. Communities affected by work- and descent-based discrimination may be confined to segregated, underserved or environmentally hazardous settlements, with limited access to safe water, sanitation, adequate housing and public infrastructure. Climate-related disasters and environmental degradation can deepen these inequalities, while women and girls often bear additional burdens through water collection, unpaid care, livelihood insecurity and heightened exposure to violence. Their knowledge, priorities and leadership remain insufficiently represented in climate adaptation, disaster-risk reduction and environmental decision-making.

The 2030 Agenda and its implementation must therefore address the structural causes of poverty and inequality, rather than focusing only on their visible outcomes. Member States should explicitly recognise discrimination based on work and descent in laws, policies and national development strategies, and ensure that anti-discrimination frameworks address inherited status, caste and

analogous systems, descent and occupational stigma. Governments should adopt and adequately finance targeted measures to eliminate discrimination by both public and private actors, including in employment, education, healthcare, housing, land access and public services. Such measures should address the specific barriers faced by women and girls, including gender-based violence, forced and hazardous labour, segregation, restrictions on property and inheritance rights, and exclusion from decision-making.

Member States should ensure that poverty eradication and social protection policies reach women and girls from affected communities, including through access to decent work, fair wages, secure livelihoods, social protection, education, healthcare, housing, land and identity documentation. Health policies must address discrimination and barriers to accessible, affordable and non-discriminatory services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. Responses to gender-based violence should be survivor-centred, accessible and sensitive to the specific forms of stigma and discrimination experienced by women from affected communities. States must also protect women human rights defenders and community leaders who challenge inherited systems of exclusion.

The commitment to leave no one behind requires more than broad references to vulnerable or marginalised populations. Governments must know which specific communities are being left behind, where they live, what forms of discrimination they face and how these inequalities affect women and girls. National averages and broad categories of data can conceal significant disparities within populations. The absence of data on communities discriminated against based on work and

descent makes their exclusion difficult to identify, monitor and address, and allows policy interventions to overlook those most affected.

The post-2030 development agenda should therefore establish a clear commitment for every country to identify and document the specific communities experiencing discrimination and exclusion within its borders. National population and housing censuses should provide a means to identify these communities, using locally appropriate categories and terminology developed in consultation with the communities concerned. Census processes should be complemented by regular household surveys, administrative data and community-led monitoring to capture inequalities that national statistics may otherwise conceal. Data should be disaggregated by sex and age, and, where relevant and safe, by other intersecting factors, so that the distinct experiences of women and girls are visible. Collection must be based on meaningful consultation, voluntary self-identification, informed participation, confidentiality and safeguards against misuse or further discrimination.

Crucially, identifying communities in national statistics must lead to action. The post-2030 framework should require governments to assess the discrimination affecting each identified community, address its structural and institutional causes, allocate adequate resources and report transparently on progress. National development plans, poverty-reduction strategies, gender-equality policies and sectoral programmes should include specific targets and indicators to measure whether women and girls from these communities are gaining equal access to rights, resources, services and decision-making. Affected communities and their representative

organisations, especially women-led organisations, must participate meaningfully in defining indicators, interpreting data, monitoring implementation and holding institutions accountable.

The United Nations and Member States should also strengthen support for community-led research, monitoring and advocacy, and ensure that women from communities discriminated against based on work and descent are represented in international and national policy processes. Their lived experiences and expertise must inform the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, rather than being treated as supplementary or anecdotal evidence. Partnerships with grassroots organisations and women human rights defenders are essential to ensure that development commitments respond to the realities and priorities of affected communities.

Achieving gender equality, eradicating poverty and fulfilling the promise to leave no one behind requires the recognition of discrimination based on work and descent as a structural and gendered human rights concern. The post-2030 agenda must move beyond general commitments to inclusion and establish concrete obligations to identify the communities being left behind, confront the discrimination they experience and measure whether change reaches them. Women and girls from these communities must be recognised not as passive recipients of development, but as rights holders, knowledge holders and agents of change whose leadership is indispensable to achieving substantive equality, dignity and justice.