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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 Education International, International Federation of Journalists, International Federation of Building and Wood Workers, International Trade Union Confederation, International Transport Workers’ Federation, International Union of Food, Agricultural Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations, Public Services International, non-governmental organizations 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

### Access to Justice for Women Sustains Peace and Democracy

Access to justice for women sustains peace and democracy. This right is enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Access to justice is also recognised by Sustainable Development Goal 16, as essential for democracy. However, gender discrimination is reflected in women's uneven access to legal systems, discriminatory laws and policies and structural barriers to women's equitable access to institutions and decision-making processes.

We call on governments to recognize and support the role of trade unions in ensuring access to justice for women, both internal and external to the workplace. Ensuring that all workers, in particular those most affected by discrimination, exclusion and exploitation, can effectively exercise their right to join a union and bargain collectively is critical.

The Agreed Conclusions of the 70th session of the Commission must include concrete commitments to build a world free of all forms of discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of direct and indirect discrimination, violence and harassment. We call for gender-responsive justice institutions that are effective, accountable, adequately financed and based on reliable data. However, effective access to justice for women and girls cannot be achieved only by tackling discrimination within and surrounding the justice systems. It requires legal and policy measures that address discrimination and inequality women and girls face in the world of work and within the society.

Given the interconnection between democracy and justice, governments must commit to protecting democracy everywhere and reverse the shrinking civic space for trade unions and civil society organizations, ensuring that the conditions for the full exercise of all human rights are enjoyed by all, including women and girls in all their diversity. This is the only way to dismantle structural barriers faced by women at the intersections of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and migrant, indigenous and disability status.

In the framework of promoting sustainable peace, in line with the Beijing+30 Declaration (paragraph 15 k) we call for ensuring access to justice for victims and survivors of all forms of violence, "including sexual and gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict". We equally call to implement ILO Recommendation 205, which requires applying a gender perspective in all crisis prevention and response, including supporting victims' socio-economic and labour market reintegration.

### Access to Justice – A Direct Means of Implementation of Women's Labour Rights

Access to justice should effectively address women's exploitation in the world of work and discriminatory working conditions based on gender.

Trade unions call on the Agreed Conclusions of the 70th session of the Commission to include a bold commitment to the ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards linked to the ILO's fundamental principles and rights at work for all women, as a way to "promoting, respecting, protecting and fulfilling women's rights to work and rights at work" in line with Beijing+30 Declaration (paragraph 15 a).

"Enforcing labour rights, including the right to organize and bargain collectively", as acknowledged by the Beijing+30 Declaration, is crucial to achieving decent work for women. Freedom of association and collective bargaining are

important not only for preventing disputes from escalating, but also for establishing settlement procedures. These enabling rights must be respected, promoted and enforced for all workers, including workers in supply chains, migrant workers, as well as those in the informal economy, in rural and urban areas, and in public and private sectors. Effective justice institutions are essential to improve compliance with those rights and to tackle the persecution of women trade union leaders in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16.10.1.

Justice systems, both internal and external to the workplace (including labour courts and labour inspection systems), must provide expeditious labour dispute prevention and resolution, with due regard for due process. They also need to be equipped through systematic training and guidance to ensure equality and non-discrimination in access to labour justice, eliminate gender stereotypes (which often lead the secondary victimisation of those who report abuse), provide effective legal remedies and access to psychosocial or other services. Moreover, access to justice must be financed adequately: Member States should make the claims process affordable, through waiving fees and by investing in specific legal aid for women, including for labour and employment claims.

It is of vital importance to address gaps in access to labour justice in global supply chains, where women are often overrepresented in most precarious jobs with no rights, including no right to join trade unions and be covered by collective bargaining agreements. There is a need for easy access to safe, fair, effective, impartial dispute resolution mechanisms, both judicial and non-judicial, with due account taken of the fact that multinational corporations operate across jurisdictions. Support for the development of the UN Business and Human Rights Treaty, as well as national and regional Human Rights Due Diligence laws, is essential.

Women's capacity building, including legal literacy, must be promoted and financed adequately, in order to provide all women and girls with the tools to claim and exercise their rights, including labour and union rights. This must be part of a broader commitment to equal access to universal, inclusive, equitable, gender-transformative, and quality education for women and girls, in all their diversity and throughout their life course.

Promoting women's equitable participation and representation in leadership roles and in decision-making processes related to law and policy making, monitoring and review, including through social dialogue and collective bargaining, is equally key. We call for removing structural barriers to women's participation as professionals within judicial systems and justice-related services, where women remain underrepresented, including through the temporary adoption of quotas.

#### Economic Justice For Women Starts with Decent Work

Decent work is essential for women's access to economic justice. However, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women directly affects their opportunities throughout the employment cycle, in accessing, remaining and progressing in decent work.

We call on governments to undertake legal and policy reforms, backed by adequate and sustainable investments, to realize equal opportunities for women for full and productive employment and decent work, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 and 8.

Such policies must extend the scope of application of labour legislation to women in precarious or informal work, to facilitate women workers' transition to the formal economy in line with ILO Recommendation 204 and with the ILO Resolution concerning the transition to formality (2025). Moreover, they must promote women's

occupational safety and health, as well as “equal access both in law and in practice to gender-responsive comprehensive and universal social protection systems, including floors”, as established by the Beijing+30 Declaration (paragraph 15 e).

Quality and affordable public services, including universal access to quality public health, care, education and lifelong learning, water, transport, energy and communication infrastructures, function as equalisers in society and are instrumental to the enjoyment of women’s human and labour rights.

Given the centrality of national comprehensive care systems to advancing women’s participation in the labour market, trade unions call for the ratification and implementation of the international labour standards relevant to the care decent work agenda, including ILO Convention 177 (home work). In line with the 2024 ILO Resolution concerning decent work and the care economy, the Agreed Conclusions of the 70th session of the Commission must recognise the State’s “primary responsibility for care provision, funding, regulation and ensuring high standards of quality, safety and health for care workers and care recipients”. Moreover, it must reaffirm the Beijing+30 Declaration’s commitment to: reduce, recognize and redistribute unpaid care work, while rewarding and ensuring the representation of paid care workers; prioritize public investments in care; and to provide “universal care and support services throughout the life course” (Paragraph 15 b) including through collective bargaining and social dialogue. Trade unions call on Member States to recognize care as an autonomous, stand-alone human right, as recognised by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights’ Advisory Opinion OC-31/25 (2025), and to implement special measures to ensure the full enjoyment of labour rights by care workers, as well as workers with family responsibilities.

Concerning access to justice in the context of digitalization, we call for regulatory frameworks to promote the “full respect for the human rights of all women and girls, both online and offline” and to mainstream the gender perspective in policy decisions that guide the development of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, in line with Beijing+30 Declaration (paragraph 15 c). Trade unions support the adoption of an ILO Convention and Recommendation on platform work, as decided by the ILO Conference 2025. Investments in education and access to technology to close the digital gender divide are equally crucial.

Trade unions call for systemic and structural approaches to close the gender pay gap, including for workers in non-standard forms of work and the self-employed. Ratification and effective implementation of ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration) and 111 (non-discrimination) should be prioritized. Strategies on equal pay should include: establishing minimum living wages through statutory processes or collective bargaining, pay equity and anti-discrimination legislation, pay transparency laws, and quotas or targeted initiatives to train, recruit and retain women in underrepresented sectors, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, e Mathematics (STEM), as well as revaluing feminized occupations and sectors. Promoting collective bargaining, social dialogue and the active participation of women leaders in union structures is crucial. Effective monitoring and enforcement of equal pay legislation should be achieved through dispute prevention and resolution, strengthening of labour inspection, minimum wage setting procedures, registration or extension of collective agreements and contract compliance, appropriate legal frameworks for bringing complaints, awareness raising campaigns and accessible complaints procedures, new skills classification systems and full transparency of salary data at both the public and private levels.

Given the Beijing+30 Declaration’s call on “taking effective action against violence and harassment in the world of work”, the Agreed Conclusions of the 70th session of the Commission must commit to the ratification of ILO Convention 190

and its effective implementation, together with ILO Recommendation 206. Governments must enact comprehensive and intersectional strategies that explicitly prohibit all forms of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work, including domestic violence and femicide; protect all workers, including those in informal or precarious employment; and address gender-based violence and harassment across the whole world of work, beyond the physical workplace. Trade unions demand safe, confidential, and gender-responsive reporting and complaint mechanisms, with protection from retaliation for victims and witnesses. Justice systems should ensure that labour inspectorates and courts have expertise on gender-based violence and harassment, timely and efficient processing, legal assistance for complainants and victims, and shifting of the burden of proof, as appropriate, in proceedings other than criminal proceedings. These policies should be adequately financed and provide support for survivors, by ensuring job and earnings security, offering work arrangements that prevent exposure and holding perpetrators accountable. Regular training and awareness raising activities for workers and employers are necessary both for prevention and for effective access to justice and remedies. Trade unions' involvement in the design, monitoring, and enforcement of policies is critical for measures to be both effective and worker-centered.

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