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Statement submitted by Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of the Mission, DePaul University, Haiti Cholera Research Funding Foundation, International Association of Charities, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Soroptimist International, UNANIMA International, VIVAT International, and WorldWIDE Network Nigeria: Women in Development and Environment, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Working Group to End Homelessness (WGEH) is a group of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC which advocate at the United Nations for persons who are vulnerable, pursuing the human right to adequate housing for all and to end homelessness, so that all people can realize their full human rights and potential, and flourish. Dedicated to the elimination of homelessness in all its forms as described in [A/RES/76/133](#) and [E/RES/2020/7](#) para. 7, the Working Group to End Homelessness works with the United Nations, global platforms to end homelessness, academic centres, and individuals who are or who have experienced homelessness to devise solutions and call for change.

People who are experiencing homelessness are a cross-section of many vulnerable populations. Among them are people who have fallen on hard times economically, migrants fleeing conflict, victims of domestic violence, individuals with mental health and drug problems, people forced from their homelands by climate change, people who seek to be legally recognized and are used as political pawns, and youth alienated from their families. But it would be a mistake and an injustice not to acknowledge that those who are experiencing homelessness are, by and large, a fluid population whose most fervent wish is to obtain a safe home for themselves and their families. Accessing the education and skills that will facilitate this transition is the challenge that member states and communities need to undertake. In the course of their search for stability and permanence, the homeless are frequently subjected to multiple forms of discrimination because their situation may carry a social stigma and raise generalized fears in those fortunate to have a roof over their heads. The COVID pandemic has only exacerbated the precariousness of those who have lost or been forced out of their homes.

Women and girls constitute a significant, though often less visible, percentage of homeless populations, and due to universal gender inequality, their circumstances demand additional attention and actions. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG5-achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls- demands that we leave no one behind; it is therefore critical that global progress encompass the vulnerable population of homeless women and girls.

One area that must be urgently addressed is the amplification and perpetuation of gender inequalities due to the ever-expanding digital divide. Lack of access to new technologies is preventing women from accessing education, jobs and indispensable services and this trend is even more pronounced in every category of homeless populations.

The landmark 2021 resolution adopted by the General Assembly on inclusive policies and programs to address homelessness urges member states to close digital divides and promote digital inclusion by addressing the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills and ensuring the benefits of new technologies.

A significant game-changer for women and girls experiencing homelessness would be to offer widespread digital education and easy access to internet services thus enabling them to develop the modern tools needed to not only to pursue employment opportunities, but to pursue better lives. Reaching and sustaining this goal may require restructuring community outreach to homeless populations as well as the continued investment of government and social services to support such programs. Businesses and civil society organizations must also play a critical role in maintaining the accessibility and affordability of these programs to ensure their ultimate success. Enabling this goal will require intense and varied capacity building

in different settings, but the ultimate benefit of empowering the potential of women and girls is tremendous.

The Working Group to End Homelessness strongly supports the UN Women “Year of Action on Gender and Technology” and the slogan “Digital rights are women’s rights”.

We seek the adoption in the near future of a Global Digital Compact that will create a normative framework to ensure the rights of all people to universal access to the internet. Digital technology is the “new public good.” Affordable broadband internet service in urban and rural areas for all marginalized populations is necessary in order for all to participate in and benefit from our digital future.

We urge you to call special attention to the often-overlooked special needs of women and girls experiencing homelessness around the world as you consider the Priority theme: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the Review theme: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.
