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Statement submitted by Working Women Association, 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.



Working Women Association

Written statement

Role of the Working Women Association in the economic empowerment of working women in the Sudan

Sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women

March 2017, New York

The Sudanese working woman

Despite the obstacles to the empowerment of working women and to their involvement in supporting economic development, which helps countries attain higher growth levels, we believe that States have much to gain from the participation of working women. The gains made by their participation benefit not only working women, but women in general, as well as men and children. Their participation results in economic and health-care gains, and makes a brighter future possible, as demonstrated by the participation of women in politics and their economic empowerment.

Women participate in and contribute greatly to efforts aimed at eradicating poverty and attaining a decent standard of living. This participation has had a positive effect on women and families, as well as society as a whole.

Sudanese working women are continuing the struggle to establish themselves in various occupations, so that they can be a significant partner in building society. Sudanese working women constitute approximately 67 per cent of government-sector workers, and women make up an even greater proportion of those employed in health-care and education.

Through their effective participation, Sudanese working women have continued to call for concerted efforts to be made to attain the 2030 sustainable development goals and for the rejection of all forms of non-equality. Working women have the qualifications needed to create added value that can be passed on to others. The State has devoted ever more of its attention to the empowerment of working women. Great gains have been made in that regard, including the introduction of positive discrimination clauses in many laws governing labour.

In that connection, the Working Women Association contributed actively to the enactment of legislation and monitored the exercise by working women of their rights as follows:

- Women were granted eight weeks of maternity leave pursuant to the Civil Service Act (2007), article 102, which was promulgated by the Ministry of Justice of the Sudan with reference to the Labour Act (1997). This article takes into account the role of women in the family and as givers of life. Women are also eligible to take three years' maternity leave, with base pay in the first year, and given an allowance for each child. The Association monitored implementation of directives calling for the establishment of childcare centres and kindergartens in places of work. The focus on working women also extended to ensuring that they enjoyed their rights under the sharia, in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Accordingly, widowed women were

granted a four-month ‘iddah (the waiting period of a woman after termination of marriage) leave, 10 days of which are paid. If the woman is pregnant, the leave is extended until she has given birth.

- The Association monitored implementation of legislation concerning family stability. Under the labour laws, women were granted five years of unpaid leave when accompanying their husbands, while retaining their right to promotion. It also monitored implementation of legislation related to working women in accordance with labour laws set out in international instruments.
- We must also not overlook work done in relation to the right of working women to obtain equal pay for equal work and to head promotion committees, on par with men.
- The participation of women in political life has also increased. Women now make up 30 per cent of Parliament members and hold constitutionally established posts.
- With regard to sustainable development and the economic empowerment of women, the secretariat of the Association mobilized efforts and contributed to the execution of many projects aimed at eradicating poverty (such as small enterprises, microfinance and interest-free loans, which were granted to individuals and groups).
- The Association also helped to execute projects and supported efforts aimed at addressing climate change and desertification by planting trees and raising the awareness of working women through workshops and seminars on the environment and safeguarding the plant cover. It also supported efforts to purchase seeds and saplings for planting orchards as part of a project on production and self-sufficiency and meeting the needs of the family from within the household.
- The secretariat of the Association is executing a project at the national and state levels to eradicate linguistic and technological illiteracy.
- The secretariat of the Association provides many forms of support to the health sector in relation to maternal, child and reproductive health.
- The secretariat executes programmes to support working women at the level of the states using a standard framework throughout the Sudan.

We should also like to make the following recommendations:

1. There must be a focus on utilizing technology and innovation to promote development and production that is grounded in innovation and the knowledge economy in projects that are run by working women.
2. Support must be given to cooperative projects aimed at raising awareness of human rights and the rights of working women.
3. The ratification of international labour instruments should be encouraged, in order to ensure the best possible implementation of international labour standards.
4. Initiatives aimed at empowering women economically should be supported, in order to stand in solidarity with working women around the world.

5. The embargo and sanctions imposed on the Sudan should be lifted. Women and children are directly affected by the embargo and sanctions, which could even have an impact on future generations. We must protect the right of future generations to enjoy the benefits of technology, which can contribute to the establishment of a sound and prosperous economic environment despite economic variability, with a view to ensuring the most basic human rights, at the forefront of which is the right to development.

Conclusion

Having given an overview of the achievements of working women in the Sudan, we should like to thank the Commission on the Status of Women for giving us this opportunity to interact with other women's organizations from around the world and present our experiences in promoting the economic empowerment of Sudanese women, and to benefit from the experiences and best practices of our counterparts with regard to the economic empowerment of women.

We should like to take this opportunity to call on the international community, including the States Members of the United Nations, as well as international and national volunteer organizations, to help the Sudanese people overcome the effects of the coercive sanctions that have been imposed on it by certain parties, most notably the United States of America, as those sanctions have grave consequences for economic development, in general, and for women and children, in particular.

It is well-known that the economic embargo has prevented Sudanese women, particularly working women, from carrying out many initiatives aimed at empowering working women in the context of their efforts to attain greater economic empowerment, both internally and externally.
