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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
Priority Theme: Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Statement submitted by Concepts of Truth, Inc., 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

Empowering Women Through Safe and Decent Work

As Teddy Roosevelt once said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” While Roosevelt may have overstated work’s benefits, doing decent work is certainly a privilege. Decent work sustains families, provides an outlet for individual talents and skills, and offers a means to serve others. Sadly, not everyone can find decent work. New estimates by the United Nations’ International Labour Organization’s “World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2022,” (ILO Report) suggest that by 2022, the COVID pandemic had contributed to a global unemployment rate of approximately 207 million people, with a disproportionate impact on women and youth.

Any proposed economic recovery program that seeks to address the rise in disparate unemployment rates requires that we evaluate whether popular solutions to sustain jobs truly benefit society post COVID. The ILO Report thus advocates for an economic recovery that is “human-centered” and built on four pillars: (1) the protection of all workers; (2) universal social protection; (3) inclusive economic growth and employment; and (4) social dialogue.

The Protection of All Workers

Protecting workers post-pandemic means guaranteeing their fundamental rights at work and ensuring their health and safety in the workplace. (ILO Report) Such a human-centered recovery cannot ignore the physical and emotional consequences of the sex industry – sex trafficking, sexual exploitation and violence, all of which proliferated during the lockdowns. Sex trafficking is a market-driven industry that exploits women and youth and denies them decent work.

Around 4.8 million people worldwide have been sexually exploited as part of the \$99 billion per year commercial sex trafficking industry, and women and girls make up more than 71 percent of persons trafficked for the purposes of forced commercial sexual exploitation. (ILO Report) The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children disclosed that online child sexual exploitation doubled in 2020 compared with the previous year as traffickers took advantage of increased online usage, lockdowns, and the economic and social crises of the pandemic to profit from an increased demand for sexual exploitation and materials. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Report (2021).

When victims of trafficking become pregnant, their pimps typically pressure them to abort so they can put them back onto the streets. Mosley, P., “Abortion And Sex-Trafficking Are Undeniably Linked Abuses Against Women,” *The Federalist* (Jan. 31, 2020) One 2014 study of trafficked women survivors found that 55 percent had at least one abortion and more than half claimed that their abortion was coerced. Lederer, L. and Wetzal, C., “The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities,” *23 Annals Health L.* 61 (2014). Each year, according to the United Nations Population Fund, roughly 61 percent of the 121 million unintended pregnancies end in abortion.

While for some women, abortion may provide short term relief from the physical and emotional stress of carrying an unexpected or unwanted child to term, numerous global studies have confirmed the negative short and long-term health impact of abortion, including psychiatric complications such as severe depression and suicide. The DeVeber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research concluded in its work, Lanfranchi, A., et. al, *Complications: Abortion’s Impact on Women*, 2d. ed. (2018) that women who aborted their first pregnancy were 65 percent more likely to fall into

clinical depression than those who had the child, while post-abortive women were at much higher risk for suicide than women who completed their pregnancies.

Some government entities are waking up to the reality of post-abortion trauma: city councils in Portland and Boston recently launched new policies permitting city employees to take paid bereavement leave following their abortions. Desanctis, D., “Bereavement and Parental Leave After Abortion,” *National Review* (January 2022).

Member states should thus create policies that de-incentivize sex trafficking and its enabler, the abortion industry. Concepts of Truth, Inc., a U.S. faith-based NGO with a 24/7 international helpline, has received approximately 20,000 calls mainly from persons suffering from the emotional distress of terminating a pregnancy and provides them with resources to heal.

Universal Social Protection

Closing gaps and providing universal access to sustainable social protection must remain a key priority. (ILO Report) Companies that pay for employees to obtain abortions while reducing leave policies for maternity, paternity, adoption and foster care, are simply elevating the company’s economic interests over the health of their employees and the rights of the pre-born, and fail to provide their employees with “decent” work, a goal of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2022, the share of employers that offer extended paid maternity leave dropped to 35 percent, down from 53 percent in 2020. In that same time frame, employers offering paid paternity leave dropped to 27 percent from 44 percent; paid adoption leave dropped to 28 percent from 36 percent; and paid foster child leave dropped to 22 percent from 28 percent. Morse, B. “Women to Pay the Price as Companies Drop Parental Leave Benefits And Abortion Trigger Bans Take Effect,” *Inc.* (Sep 9, 2022).

As companies reduced paid leave allowances, many companies, including Disney, Warner Brothers, Netflix, Google, Target, Kroger, and Amazon concomitantly increased subsidies for employees who needed to travel out of state to obtain abortions in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. “Companies Fund More Abortion Travel Killing Babies, But Paid Maternity Leave is Down 18%,” *LifeNews* (Sep. 2, 2022).

Concepts of Truth recommends that member states who seek to advance the goals of the 2030 Agenda, pledging that no one will be left behind and recognizing the fundamental dignity of the human person (Agenda, Par. 4), will prioritize maternal and infant health over abortion and profits.

Inclusive Employment and Social Dialogue

One often overlooked area of decent and meaningful “employment,” broadly defined, is that of the role of parent. Stable families are good for society. As more and more parents discovered the joys and intellectual stimulation of being home with and even home schooling their children during the lockdowns, parents who want to continue and can afford to do so should be encouraged, not marginalized.

Numerous studies show that having a parent, particularly a mother, home during a child’s early years has long term benefits including stronger academic performance, less stress, and fewer behaviour problems. See, Berger, L. M., et al, “Maternity Leave, Early Maternal Employment and Child Health and Development in the US, *Economic Journal* Vol 115 (Feb. 2005); Carneiro, P. et al., “A Flying start? Maternity Leave Benefits and Long Run Outcomes on Children”, IZA Discussion Paper 5793 (Jan. 28, 2011). Such benefits even extend to older children when a parent has opportunities to

stay home. Bettinger, E. “Why Stay-at-Home Parents are Good for Older Children,” Stanford University Graduate School of Business, *Insights* (October 20, 2014).

Policies of member states can support a parent who chooses to stay home through possible tax breaks in lieu of child care subsidies. In 1998, the government of Norway successfully implemented a “Cash for Care” policy to subsidize parents who wanted to care for their infants and toddlers at home, and such policies are worth perpetuating.

Conclusion

Providing decent work means protecting the health and safety of employees and their progeny. Encouraging women to have abortions undermines their physical and mental health and promotes employers’ short term interests rather than investing in employees’ long term health and stable families. We cannot claim to seek the empowerment of women when we deny them a voice. Concepts of Truth, Inc. offers counseling and reproductive health resources to individuals of all faiths and backgrounds to educate the whole person to make healthy life choices that empower future generations.
