Draft Statement from Soroptimist International for LDC consultation

Soroptimist International(S) welcomes the opportunity for civil society organisations to submit comments on the Zero Draft Outcome document on the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Committee Meeting for the Fifth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5).

tributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through empowering local communities to create their own transformative change, supporting the 2030 Agenda. Active in over 3,000 communities across 122 countries worldwide, including in Least Developed Countries, SI contributes

and girls. By supporting communities to identify their needs, SI projects build local capacity, infrastructure and skills. Our comments are based upon the tried and tested experience and knowledge of Soroptimist International grassroots projects which respond to the needs of marginalised women and girls working in many of the Least Developed Countries.

S hopes

## Gender Equality (SDG5)

To achieve the LDC Outcome Document targets, women and girls in all their diversity must equally benefit and experience equal outcomes from any actions taken. Increasingly, women and girls are being left behind and are disproportionately impacted by poverty, food insecurity, economic insecurity, a lack of educational opportunities, barriers to accessing health services, and many other sustainable development challenges. Gender-transformative actions which will benefit all of those living in Least Developed Countries, not only women and girls, is particularly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The disproportionate and gender unequal impacts of COVID-19 upon all women and girls was described by the UN Secre

compounded by pre-existing discriminatory attitudes, processes and policies that harm women and girls in all their diversity, and rely on outdated and regressive gender stereotypes. Many methods we have to combat COVID-19 are restricted to those with more resources or those from high socio-economic backgrounds. Women and girls in Least Developed Countries have been disproportionately economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the following ways:

Lockdowns require that people having space to isolate the homeless, those living in slums, shared housing, prisons, shelters or densely populated areas cannot access that space.

Women and girls have faced additional barriers to education and employment as they do not have access to computers, reliable electricity and frequently, family support. This is due to the digital divide or because the needs of men and boys are prioritised within the household.

If this were to happen, the global community, and in particular countries who are not ensuring the fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations, will be responsible for a continuing health crisis and for driving worsening gender inequality. All people, regardless of where they live or their income, must have access to a vaccine as quickly as possible. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the interconnectedness of our world. National self-interest does not and will not contain COVID-19. Multilateralism is needed as COVID-19 will continue to threaten all countries unless it is addressed equally across all countries. Fair vaccine distribution is not only vital to addressing inequalities, but it is one of the most effective ways to address the pandemic and its unequal impacts.

S would like to address particularly

in the context of ensuring the targets of SDG5

on gender equality can be met.

Within Key Focus Area 1 SI is especially concerned with the LDC5 zero draft paragraphs on (SDG4) and (SDG3)

Education (LDC Zero Draft para 38

to unequal outcomes. This will require more political will at all levels to confront prejudice, social inequality and the marginal regard for girls that can all be identified as a root causes of many of these problems.

Increased efforts must be made to achieve gender equality within formal and non-formal education systems, including vocational training and apprenticeships, as a critical aspect of the 2030 Agenda.

SI calls upon all development actors to expedite efforts to achieve SDG4 by including the following in the LDC5 Programme of Action:

this requires renewed and increased efforts

to reach all girls, older women and those who have not attended school, who come from marginalised or rural communities, who have caring responsibilities and those who are leaving prisons and other institutions.

-based approach,

including the human rights of women and girls.

nal needs of migrating and displaced women and girls, regardless

for a variety of reasons many older women have been unable to participate in education and develop new skills or adapt skills they have, to support the ability to gain a stable income.

Adopting a broad understanding of education, apprenticeships and vocational training, that responds to the needs of the economy, and the individuals participating in forms of education.

t education institutions are free from violence, including gender-

provision more widely. The reallocation of resources and changing priorities have seen declining quality in healthcare related to sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal health services so it is good to see this recognised at

This will require full resourcing and support by governments, the private sector, CSOs and other stakeholders.

The current global context of 0 glfful