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Statement submitted by Women’s Health and Education Center (WHEC), 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

Strategies for Higher Education for All: An International Initiative

Creating a world where everyone thrives

Safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who are forced to flee is a humanitarian imperative, as well as a binding obligation. It remains at the forefront of the international response. Yet, as we have already seen, there is an important intersection between refugee protection and migration, especially in ‘mixed’ migratory flows: the causes are often intertwined; they may be exposed to the same appalling risks in route, and as they progress towards their eventual destinations they face the same consequences of xenophobia, nationalist sentiment, and dehumanization. Addressing the situation of people on the move and protecting their rights and welfare calls for a range of responses, some common to all, and some differentiated according to status and protection needs. What then are the fundamental considerations that should shape our responses to all people on the move, especially those traveling in today’s ‘mixed’ migratory flows? First and foremost, protecting the lives and dignity of all must be at the center of the response.

Expanding UNESCO Chair Program

Established in 1992, UNESCO Chair Program had the vision to advance and integrate systems of research, training, and activities in diverse fields by building university networks and encouraging inter-university cooperation through the transfer of knowledge and expertise across borders. As the world faces a broad set of emerging technological, social, political, and environmental disruptions, programs like UNESCO Chair Program are needed in Education & Health more than ever to contribute towards sustainable development.

The Women’s Health and Education Center’s (WHEC’s) Higher Education and Chair Program/Network was launched in 2022 in collaboration with the UNESCO and Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) to improve sustainability literacy for all, with a special focus on women, girls, minorities, and migrants. It is fostering collaborative research partnerships and networks in both the developed and developing countries. The e-Learning, e-Health, and e-Government Platform <http://www.WomensHealthSection.com> is accessible in 227 countries and territories and has established new teaching programs, generated novel ideas through research and dialogue, and has contributed to the enrichment of existing higher education partnerships. HESI Community (partnershipaccelerator.netlify.app) <https://partnershipaccelerator.netlify.app/hesi/>

WHEC’s program with the HESI community and UNESCO was established in 2022 as a prime means of building the capacities of International Research and International Network through the exchange of novel ideas, research, and higher education. Thus, it promotes North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation as a strategy to develop the capacity of institutions. Relevance, anticipation, and effectiveness are among the prime goals of the WHEC’s Chair Program for Education and Health, which is one of this NGO’s most intersectoral programs.

Established in 2001, WHEC was granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 2008. It has a vision to build infrastructure in developing countries and to create meaningful opportunities for girls, women, minorities, and migrants to participate in global philanthropy. The organization embraces the tremendous diversity of people, religions, and cultures around the world. In support of this belief, WHEC has established an academic and cultural focus at important institutions around the globe to nurture common interests

and potential. By supporting reproductive health and research, and open dialogue and objective analysis, WHEC has laid the groundwork for mutual understanding among countries.

The initiative is providing advocacy, information, and consultation on everyday issues associated with mental health, women’s health, child health, violence against women and children, and healthcare policies – to name a few areas. Our e-learning, e-Health, and e-Government development is holistic, evidence-based, and people-centered. It considers how people live within their own environments and responds to stakeholders’ needs.

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

On September 19th, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. It marks a political commitment of unprecedented force and resonance. It filled what had been a perennial gap in the international protection system – that of truly sharing responsibility for refugees. It has paved the way for the adoption of two new global compacts in 2018: a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration. By adopting this declaration, UN Member States reaffirmed their obligations to fully respect the human rights of refugees and migrants.

This document proposes a more comprehensive and effective refugee response model, based on sharing responsibility with refugee-hosting states through forms of support that move beyond humanitarian aid and early investment in solutions. This model is already being applied in a dozen countries and two regional situations, with a particular focus on shifting away from encampment and fostering the inclusion of refugees in local communities and economies. Development investments are integral to the new model. The World Bank has been heavily involved and is rolling out important new financing instruments for refugee hosting countries, and several bilateral development agencies are also engaged. There is also an important role for development aid in supporting the drive for solutions in countries of origin by addressing the causes of conflict and fragility.

Women’s Health and Education Center’s (WHEC’s) Response Framework

Social justice requires healthcare, education, food, water, housing, employment, social protection, and digital technologies so that no one is left behind. WHEC’s initiatives with the UN, WHO, and UNESCO aim to address the underlying causes of poverty and inequality in a world where it is estimated that more than 600 million people still live in extreme poverty. WHEC focuses on the importance of supporting those countries and communities that host a large number of refugees, promoting the inclusion of refugees in host communities, ensuring the involvement of development actors from an early stage, and developing a ‘whole-of-society’ approach to refugee responses. Its four key objectives are to:

1. Ease the pressures on host countries and communities;
2. Enhance refugee self-reliance;
3. Expand third-country solutions; and
4. Support conditions in countries of origin for a return in safety and dignity.

Our recommendations for leaving no one behind are:

1. Resettlement opportunities should be complemented by labor migration, family reunion, scholarships, and other migration avenues.

2. The New York Declaration adopted in 2016 provides for the negotiation of a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration, which will enhance coordination on international migration and protection of migrants.

3. Foster societies where everyone is included. Both social justice and digital transformation can improve access to essential services for vulnerable communities, creating opportunities for everyone.

4. Expanding UNESCO Chair Program and promoting global collaboration. Fostering social justice is a collective responsibility.

5. Foster inclusive digital transformation. Digital technologies including artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things have the potential to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities.

Refugee resettlement has remained an important instrument that allows for refugees with particular protection needs, including women at risk and survivors of torture, to be resettled to third countries where they and their families are able to build a future. Today, around 2.6 billion people, or one-third of the global population, remain off-line. Digital transformation involves changing the way we live, work, and interact with each other, but to have positive effects on societies and economies, this transformation must be inclusive.

Building sustainable partnerships, through **WHEC's e-Learning, e-Health, and e-Government Initiative**: Improving Global Partnerships for Education and Health | High-Level Political Forum 2022 (un.org) available @ <https://hlpf.un.org/2022/programme/improving-global-partnerships-for-education-and-health> will offer a way forward. While obligations to promote the rights of women and children are protected by international conventions, difficulties in putting moral obligation into practice still abound.

Simply expressed, we **cannot** let them down.
