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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: promoting empowerment of people in
achieving poverty eradication, social integration and
full employment and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by International Federation for Home Economics, a non-governmental organization in special 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.



Statement

Empowerment for everyday competencies to eradicate poverty and to achieve social integration, full employment and decent work for all

Home economics education has the potential to empower individuals, families and communities to meet daily challenges and use opportunities even in crisis based on individual, family, economic, natural or political occurrences.

Empowering individuals and families affected by poverty, handicap, age and social exclusion through home economics education contributes effectively to achieve poverty eradication and social integration.

Working in a multidisciplinary profession, home economists are aware of the many dimensions of poverty and social exclusion of different groups of people. In addition to fulfilling basic physical needs, attention has to be paid to family life and the ability to act as members of the community.

Empowering people for sustainable resource management and income generation

Poverty has many faces. Inadequate income can lead to lack of food, shelter and other physical difficulties. Indirectly, insufficient material resources also lead to other dimensions of poverty, such as social exclusion or poor access to education, health, services or infrastructure. Opportunities to act as members of society and communities may decrease. Problems caused by poverty put individuals, families and communities under great stress. In a changing world new skills are needed to survive and to fulfil one's basic needs. Urbanization, for example, changes the patterns of food consumption, as the ability to produce one's own food is narrowed.

Knowledge of wise consumption in the market economy is needed, even if the material resources available for use are very scarce. Home economics education can improve knowledge of best possible practices and techniques and how to act as a member of the consumer society in a changing world. By turning such knowledge into everyday life skills, individuals, families and communities can make the best use of the scarce resources available and add value to them in a sustainable manner.

Many projects which have been evaluated in home economics education in countries around the world verify that education in home economics improves the daily life of families and households. Home economics education empowers women and families to meet daily challenges and use opportunities even in crisis based on family, economic, natural or political events.

In addition, home economics skills regarding the chain of home-made products, such as food production and clothing, may lead to income generation options. For example, education in gardening, small-scale farming, animal husbandry and sewing, the ability to produce handmade craft products and education in home economics services enable women to produce marketable vegetables, food and clothing, or to work in households or business and generate income to improve the quality of life for all family members.

Empowering affected people and stakeholders on all levels to secure social integration of all marginalized people

Around the world, people living in poverty, including persons with disabilities and older persons, experience social exclusion. Children growing up in poverty are often marginalized for their lives. Persons with disabilities and older persons are often excluded from social, economic and cultural involvement in the community. Empowerment for the social integration of persons with disabilities and older persons into the general community has to be taken into consideration by all members of the community.

Empowerment of people affected by social exclusion must focus on the following aspects:

- Education in home economics to enable affected people to manage their lives
- Enabling individuals and self-help groups to take action and to campaign for their rights, interests and political demands at the local, regional and national levels
- Information and consultation by all members in the community to be responsible for living conditions at the community, regional and national levels to secure a suitable living environment for all groups of affected people

From their understanding of home economics, all home economics experts in research, education, family services and family counselling take into consideration the individual needs and challenges for all individuals or groups of people.

Home economics content draws from multiple disciplines, synthesizing them through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary inquiry. This coalescing of disciplinary knowledge is essential because the phenomena and challenges of everyday life are not typically one-dimensional. The content (disciplinary bases) from which studies of home economics is taken is dependent upon the context.

The awareness of the specific demands of individuals and families enables the experts to help them to manage their lives in an effective way and to advocate for their interests. From the perspective of the International Federation for Home Economics, home economics experts are in a position to empower leaders at the community, regional and national levels to develop strategies to realize adequate living conditions for all groups of individuals to meet their daily needs and to avoid social exclusion.

Home economics experts contribute to family-related discussions and development of policies as members at the local, regional, national and global levels to reduce or avoid social exclusion.

Empowerment for efficient family and household management as bases for employment and work-family balance

Full employment and decent working conditions are basic demands for achieving the eradication of poverty and fostering sustainable development. As a precondition for income generation of individuals or family members, they should be empowered to handle their households, most of all their resources, such as time and finances, in a suitable way and to organize the family and household in accordance with the demands and needs of every single member. Insufficient

knowledge and competencies will lead to conflicts, stress and difficulties, and often to excessive demands on women, which might affect not only the families but also work and business. In addition to adequate knowledge and competencies, families should respect gender aspects: both men and women should contribute to the family tasks and homemaking.

As a basis for sustainable employment and healthy families, the work-family balance for all members is a crucial aim. To empower individuals and families to keep their work-family balance, home economics education should be integrated within the syllabus for girls and boys. All family members need basic household management competencies in terms of finances and time, sustainable consumption, healthy nutrition, childcare and care for older persons and people living in vulnerable situations. Such competencies would help to avoid stress and illness, most of all in the case of women.

Different scientific research results of home economics experts related to work-family balance show the effect of basic home economics competencies to avoid stress and excessive demands on family members.

From the perspective of the International Federation for Home Economics, empowerment of individuals, families and communities through home economics education will contribute decisively to the aim of poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all.
