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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE RESOLUTION

FEMINA PAX:

*Why 30% of Women at Diplomatic Negotiating Tables is a Peace Imperative —
Not an Option*

Video Statement by:

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at Geneva
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INTRODUCTION

Opening Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable Representatives of the United Nations, Distinguished Delegations gathered in Geneva,

I take the floor today to lend my full and resolute support to the *Femina Pax* resolution, championed with rare vision and determination by Guila Clara Kessous — UNESCO Artist for Peace — before the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

This resolution demands one thing that is simple, just, and long overdue: that a minimum of **30% of seats at diplomatic negotiating tables** be guaranteed to women.

I wish to begin by invoking two voices now silenced — but whose call echoes today with undiminished force: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza.

IN MEMORIAM I

Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1922–2016): Peace Requires Justice for All

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations (1992–1996), was the first Arab and first African to lead the world organisation. A scholar of international law, a seasoned diplomat, and a fearless architect of post-Cold War multilateralism, he embodied the conviction that peace without inclusion is peace without foundation.

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His landmark 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, redefined the scope of the United Nations' role in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. Central to his vision was a profound insight: that peace cannot be imposed by military force alone — it must be built from within societies, with all their members.

Boutros-Ghali declared with clarity:

"Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice."

He believed that justice, in turn, was inseparable from equal participation. A former professor of international law at Cairo University, he understood that any negotiated order that excludes half of humanity is structurally fragile — not a peace, but a postponement of conflict.

As Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali repeatedly emphasised that sustainable peacebuilding required the full and active engagement of civil society, communities, and — critically — women. He warned that the international community's tendency to leave women on the margins of formal peace processes was not merely a question of fairness: it was a strategic error that undermined the durability of every agreement signed.

He further recognised that "conflicts are easier to start than to stop" and that "prevention is the best weapon." Preventive diplomacy, in his framework, was by definition inclusive diplomacy — one that draws on the full human reservoir of wisdom, empathy and relational intelligence. Women are central to that reservoir.

Boutros-Ghali also championed the democratisation of international institutions themselves — arguing that legitimacy flows from representation. A Security Council, a peace table, or a mediation team that structurally excludes women cannot claim to represent the communities it purports to serve.

As one who had the honour of working alongside Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, I can attest that his commitment to inclusive multilateralism was not rhetorical. He pressed, persistently and against significant resistance, for a United Nations that would live up to its own Charter — beginning with the equality of all human beings. The *Femina Pax* resolution is, in its deepest logic, the institutional fulfilment of what he advocated throughout his remarkable life.

IN MEMORIAM II

Federico Mayor Zaragoza (1934–2024): The Woman Defers Violence

Federico Mayor Zaragoza served as UNESCO Director-General from 1987 to 1999. Under his leadership, the Culture of Peace programme was born — built around the pillars of education for peace, human rights, democracy, the fight against poverty, and conflict prevention. He was a scientist, a statesman, and a poet, and he never ceased to repeat one profound conviction about the role of women in building peace.

He stated with characteristic clarity:

"We, men, have learned to resolve everything by force — which is precisely what the Culture of Peace fights against. We must replace the perverse adage 'If you want peace, prepare for war' with 'If you want peace, contribute to its construction through your daily conduct.' Women hold a particular respect for life and, by nature, defer the use of violence."

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This was not poetry. It was a political conviction, repeated tirelessly across international forums, universities and peace conferences throughout four decades — including in texts he shared with me in my capacity as his adviser.

Mayor Zaragoza also reminded us that "wars begin in the minds of men" — echoing UNESCO's own Constitution — and that "the defences of peace must be constructed in the minds of men." But he knew that those defences could not be built without women. He championed "dialogue, understanding and bridge-building between different cultures and civilisations" — qualities he linked directly to the presence of women in decision-making spaces.

He was fond of saying: "Tomorrow is always too late." Today, the *Femina Pax* resolution translates his lifetime's call into binding international obligation.

THE DATA

A Stark Reality in Numbers

The figures are incontrovertible. Between 1992 and 2019:

13%	of negotiators in peace processes worldwide
6%	of mediators in international conflicts
6%	of signatories to peace agreements
80%	of people displaced by conflicts — are women

Those who suffer most from war are those consulted least when it comes to ending it. This contradiction was denounced by both Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Federico Mayor Zaragoza across decades of international engagement. It is time to correct it — definitively, and through the force of international law.

THE EVIDENCE

The Scientifically Proven Case

The *Femina Pax* resolution is not a symbolic gesture. It is a strategic imperative, confirmed by international research:

When women participate in peace talks, agreements are 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years.

When women engage in diplomatic negotiations, a fundamental shift occurs in the quality and durability of the resulting alliance or treaty. Women consistently seek to preserve the relationship within the negotiation — and it is precisely there that lasting peace is anchored.

Both Boutros-Ghali and Mayor Zaragoza understood this: a peace built without women is an incomplete peace. A half-built peace. A peace that is destined to fracture.

THE RESOLUTION

What Femina Pax Concretely Proposes

The *Femina Pax* resolution establishes concrete, binding mechanisms:

- A minimum quota of 30% of women at all international diplomatic negotiating tables
- Robust training and mentoring programmes for women negotiators
- Monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms within the United Nations system
- A structured response to the often-cited — and often false — argument about the supposed lack of qualified women

The UN Secretary-General himself has recommended the establishment of "binding quotas" on women's presence at negotiating tables, and set as an initial objective that at least one third of participants in UN-led peace processes be women. The *Femina Pax* resolution transforms this objective into a binding obligation of international law.

THE CALL

A Solemn Call to Action

Women are peacebuilders, fighters, politicians, and advocates. Not only must they be able to exercise their fundamental human right to participate in decisions that affect them — their contribution is a strategic imperative for all of humanity.

It is time to raise the curtain and ensure that **30% of women are systematically represented at diplomatic negotiating tables** — not to ease our conscience, but because history has shown us, time and again, that their absence costs lives.

I call upon every Member State, every delegation, every representative gathered here, to support the *Femina Pax* resolution at this 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council.

CONCLUSION

A Memorial Closing

Federico Mayor Zaragoza repeated with unwavering conviction:

"Tomorrow is always too late."

And Boutros Boutros-Ghali reminded us, with equal clarity:

"Peace is not the absence of war, but the presence of justice."

Tomorrow can no longer wait. Peace cannot be built by those in power alone — it is built with women, or it is not built at all.

It is time for women to take their place at the tables where the future of peoples is negotiated.

In memory of Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Federico Mayor Zaragoza — two giants of world diplomacy who believed in peace as a total human project. In tribute to all women who build peace from the shadows. And in resolute support of the Femina Pax resolution.

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