



## Commemoration of the International Day of Care and Support

Actualising the Value of the Care Economy in  
Attaining the 2030 Agenda

29 October 2024 – Palais des Nations, Geneva

### Speech delivered by Afaf Abounouadar, MMM executive director

What has happened for us to need to create an international day of care and support? What has changed in our societies that we now need to remind ourselves of the very nature of what binds us together? How can we build a society, protect ourselves, and protect the planet without care?

Professor Tim Jackson, economist and writer famously said: Care is the beating heart of an economy... without care there is no economy! We all need to understand and remember that.

Thank you for inviting Make Mothers Matter to take part in this 2<sup>nd</sup> international day of care and support. As a civil society voice, we are delighted to have the opportunity to highlight the importance of recognizing women, especially mothers and caregivers, as essential economic actors, a topic that sits at the very heart of our mission and all we do.

At MMM, we believe that to achieve true social development and gender equality, it is essential to recognise and support the contributions of mothers and their care work. Mothers are pivotal agents of change and drivers of social development.

The unpaid care work they perform sustains families, communities and society. All over the world, this vital work falls mostly on them. In the absence of proper recognition and support, they are limited in their opportunities for personal growth, economic, societal or even political participation.

606 million women are kept out of the labour force to care for their children and families. According to the ILO, worldwide, more than 16 billion hours are devoted every day to unpaid domestic and care work. It equates to 2 billion people – about a fourth of the world's total population – working full-time with no pay.

There is a great gender imbalance: according to UNDP, women shoulder about 4 hours and 25 minutes every day of care work compared to 1 hour and 23 minutes for men – that's 3.2 times higher.

These figures are unsustainable.

At Make Mothers Matter, we have been fighting for years to highlight the work done by women who are mothers. Because we see them as part of the solution and not the problem. We see the results every day through the community work of our grassroots members across the globe. Such as the Mothers Centres promoted by our associate member Mothers centres International Network for Empowerment (MINE). Also key are programmes supporting redistribution and the involvement of fathers in domestic and care work, like those run by our partners MenCare and ACEV.

We also support a multi-stakeholder approach to national care policies, based on the principle of co-responsibility: in addition to governments, communities and private companies also have a key role to play in recognising, redistributing and supporting unpaid care work.

It is not only a matter of fairness; it is a crucial step toward building a more resilient and inclusive economy.

Care is a common good that must be nurtured and valued.

Today offers us an opportunity to look at the overall scenario facing us and explore how we can transform our systems to prioritize the wellbeing of people and the planet, placing care at the centre. Indeed, looking at today's title "Actualising the Value of the Care Economy in Attaining the Agenda 2030", it is clear that: Maternity is a trigger for gender inequalities (SDG 5), poverty (SDG 1), and health and wellbeing (SDG 3).

If we want to attain the SDGs, and we don't have that much time left, we need a radical shift in how we view caregiving responsibilities and how they are shared.

AND as a matter of urgency, we have to work not only for mothers but with them. As I said before, they are a part of the solution. They are key to attaining the SDGs.

Thank you.