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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Women’s World Summit Foundation, 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.



Statement

Women's progress throughout United Nations history since 1975 is a remarkable story, with gender equality receiving international prominence during the United Nations Decade for Women and the four major United Nations conferences held in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing.

The empowerment of women and the gains that have been made worldwide are a true achievement for humanity. The Millennium Development Goals have provided a road map for the significant gains that have been continually achieved. However, this set of goals is only a small part of what should be done.

The post-2015 development agenda is an opportunity to renew our commitment to eliminate, once and for all, the root causes of gender inequality, for example:

- Persistent attitudes, stereotypes and practices that socially enforce gender roles and relations and confine women to unpaid care work and reproductive roles
- The use of tradition and culture as an excuse to deny women their fundamental human rights
- A development paradigm that fails to put people, especially women and children, at the centre of planning
- A dominant economic model that encourages short-term economic profit, greed and exploitation to the detriment of social justice and the intergenerational well-being of people, societies and their environment

How many times must we claim our rights and gender equality? Will Member States continue to adopt scores of resolutions and declarations on gender empowerment, without concrete implementation? Given that women make up half of humanity and aware of their contribution to equality, development and peace, and considering the knowledge and statistics the United Nations continues to give to the world, we must ask disturbing questions.

How many times do we need to repeat that women work and care for all humanity and contribute to the creation of a world that works for all? The reality is linked to the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals: the empowerment of women, food production, universal education, maternal health, lower child mortality and environmental protection. All gains are connected to women's full participation.

How many times do we need to stress that there will be no sustainable development without peace and human security and that women must be fully engaged as key partners in peace, mediation, negotiation and governmental processes?

How many times do we need to remind our Governments to take action with regard to gender inequalities, including the following:

- 95 per cent of domestic violence is against women
- 80 per cent of the world's trafficked persons are women
- 80 per cent of refugees in the world are women and children

- 70 per cent of the world's poor are women
- 66 per cent of all hours worked in the world, paid and unpaid, are performed by women
- 60 per cent of the world's hungry are women and girls
- Women hold only 20 per cent of the world's parliamentary seats
- Women own only 15 per cent of all property
- Women still earn 20 to 30 per cent lower salaries than men for the same job
- Over 200 million women worldwide do not have access to family planning
- Globally, 123 million youths (aged 15-24) lack basic reading and writing skills; 61 per cent are young women
- If the current trends continue, 142 million girls will be married before their eighteenth birthday by 2020

How many times do we need to repeat that inadequate governance and limited resources are no longer an excuse? The world has the financial means. It is time to move beyond profit-making economic models. The new development framework must not backtrack on current global commitments, particularly the unmet Millennium Development Goals and other global targets.

The answer is not blowing in the wind. We call on Member States to focus on an action agenda in support of real change in the status of women. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, past President of the Security Council, speaking at the High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace on 6 September 2013, made it clear that this is essential for the future of both men and women: "Until women's equality is established in all spheres of human activity, the human right to peace is not possible. Without peace, development is impossible, and without women, neither peace nor development is possible."

The women of the world will continue to demand accountability from Governments, realizing that social change requires that people stay involved and committed to equality, development and peace for all.

Note: The statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council: Femmes Afrique solidarité, International Federation of University Women, Medical Care Development International, Mothers Legacy Project, Mouvement mondial des mères international, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Solar Cookers International, Women's World Summit Foundation and World Young Women's Christian Association.