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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Youth Competence Center, 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

Youth Competence Center, statement on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world. Over the last decades more girls are going to school, fewer girls are forced into early marriage. Many women are serving in parliament and in leadership positions with the help of laws that were reformed to advance gender equality.

Despite the policy in place to advance women and girls involvement in positions, access to education and basic health, and empowerment, many issues are still on the rise which are discriminating laws and social norms against the female gender, underrepresentation of women at all levels of political leadership, increase of physical and sexual violence, various forms of abuse.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has shown that limited progress has been made on gender equality and women's right.

Nearly 60 per cent of women work in the informal economy, which puts them at a greater risk of falling into poverty due to climate change. With lockdown measures in place, the pandemic has also led to an increase in violence against women and girls, making women and girls trapped with their abusers, struggling to access healthcare services.

Research has showed that 30 per cent of women ages 20 to 24 years were married before age 18. 18 per cent of over-partnered women and girls aged 15–49 years have experienced physical and sexual abuse.

Women and girls have a right to equality in all areas which must be embedded across all institutional processes so therefore all efforts must be put in place to cut the root of gender discrimination and allow for equal opportunities for all women and girls specifically in term of accessing information, job opportunities, funding and influencing decision making.

It is also observed that women are still often absent from the development of disaster risk reduction strategies and decision making processes which also indicated that their absence is felt in the development of national priorities, including those related to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

In June 2016, only 22.8 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women and there was a slow increase from 11.43 per cent in 1995.

The rise of the SDGs offer the opportunity to galvanize the support needed to finally achieve women's full and equal participation in policy, programmes and political affairs

Gender Equality is a fundamental human right and women and girls' empowerment is essential to expand economic growth, promote social development and enhance business performance, women and girls of the Youth Competence Center will continue to take the responsibility for all sectors of the economy to respect human rights including the rights of women and girls in Nigeria.