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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

**Written statement* submitted by the Women's Federation for World Peace International,
a non-governmental organization in general consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 February 2004]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The right to development, legitimized as a fundamental human right in the Declaration in 1986, had originally emerged as a right to 'economic' development but had already been applied in its broader interpretation- that is, as a right to the 'complete' development of the human being. Considering the right to development in its broader sense by addressing the social, cultural and even spiritual aspects of personal development is the only means of ensuring sustainable development. Its not housing', but homes and not just 'incomes', but dignified livelihoods that will encourage the momentum of development. Hunger and poverty can never be eradicated with just food and money. Even 'development with a human face' is not enough. Developmental incentives must address the complete development of the human being as an active participant in and as a beneficiary of development.

We all know that there are over 1 billion people in the world living in abject poverty, and precious resources are still being squandered on weapons and methods of destruction. We also know that many who would be in a position to alleviate that burden have not really taken on the mandate wholeheartedly. In September of 2000, the member nations of the UN adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). It was deemed ambitious, but feasible, that these 8 goals could be achieved by the year 2015. Part of that optimism was drawn from the fact that all actors pledged their commitment. It was perceived the mutual effort to raise living standards in distant Least Developed Countries (LDC) would bring increased global security and eventual benefit to all. They unanimously deemed it worth the self-imposed belt tightening sanctions that would insure it.

As we approach the one quarter mark in our 2015 target, pockets of skepticism have settled in. It is always easier to look around to see who is not doing what they promised –and loose incentive than study the successes and try to revitalize the momentum. The reality is that there **are** many countries 'on target' and greater access to the reports of their success could lighten the work of governments whose task is to convince its citizens of the viability and worth of their decisions.

- **First:** Importance of creation of mechanisms of exchange of information between civil society NGO's, religious and educational institutions, etc.) and governments. Well-publicized recognition of the most successful of these non-governmental initiatives would reduce apathy and improve civic participation. It could also be an opportunity for governments to give feedback to the NGO's about which initiatives integrate well with public policy and to have documented access to the wealth of civil society's response.

Human rights and development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing through the bridge of human responsibility. That response is much more likely to succeed when its source is genuine concern for and empathy with others. Governments can bind its citizens by threat of law, but then they must always set up complicated mechanisms to guarantee compliance, creating distance, mistrust and finally apathy. Missing are the incentives that link people to people, the core of social ethics and personal development.

The right to development is not only for the developing countries, but is, for other reasons desperately needed by the economically developed countries too. Misguided development without any ethical guidelines or vision is rendering us and our children, the future leaders, numb to any sense of global responsibility and commitment. The incredible advances of information technology have too often been harnessed in the pursuit of egotistic thrills and violent aggressions. Although the developing countries are in need of help for essential resources, their quality of life due to close family and communal bonds often give a value and dignity that is difficult to find in our modern society with its reverence for individuality. As Eleanor Roosevelt has so wisely said, 'when you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die'. Governments, institutions and parents together must work much harder to

promote the importance of integrity and of lifestyles that makes conscious effort to contribute to the greater good of the society.

There is one institution that naturally sets up conditions for people to learn to reach out and care for each other- that could reverse the modern trends of our saturated societies. This is one institution that has been so under-represented and misunderstood. It thrives on community spirit and living for the sake of others. It gives hands-on training for conflict prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. It can give the tools for successful disarmament strategies and reconciliation and, as a by-product, develops the integrity and wisdom of its members to know the value of investing in development for the sake of the whole- that is the family.

Dysfunctional families cannot offer these benefits to the society. The stress and demands of our modern society have pulled and tugged at the essential fiber of family life: character development through living for others. The United Nations has always recognized the importance of the family as evidenced in the founding documents. Even the giant mural on the wall of the Security Council chamber has placed the nuclear family at its center.

- **Second:** In this ten year anniversary of the Year of the Family (1994), let us look deeply into this basic natural unit of society to see what the family does have to offer to our development targets. Governments, institutions and international organizations know that there is no replacement for the family in disasters and emergencies. As so well pointed out by a group of international NGO's at the time of the celebration of the Year of the Family, 'the family is the principal environment where the poorest can experience their dignity as human beings'.

To give in to modern trends in our western society that view marriage and family as outdated would be suicide. These two institutions that have until now, survived the test of time are built on commitment, shared responsibility, loyalty and love and their contribution to development of civilization is immeasurable. The unique and complementary roles of women and men can be identified and understood in healthy families. The strengths of both sexes is most apparent there as they co-operate for the greater good of the family as a whole or as families and communities bond to serve the greater community's interest. The same dynamic renders success or failure to inter governmental relations. The United Nations can be effective only when its members are willing to give priority to the interests of the whole, again the lesson first and best learned in the family. The training in life skills that women and men receive as successful spouses and parents should be recognized as important capacity-building assets that enhance other professional training.

Security Council Resolution 1325 has opened a door in recognizing that women who have often forged the greatest drive for peace and development should be actively involved in all efforts to rebuild the economic, political and social fabric of their countries. It is not only that women should have the right to contribute to the process- but also that their particular input could make the critical difference in actually bring about success.

- **Third:** Governments, international organizations should invest more to find ways to bring qualified women into their higher circles.
- a) More research could be conducted (or made available, if already existing) that show the percentage of women's participation in decision making and managerial positions. Studies could compare records and draw conclusions and make transparent decisions as to the best ways to alleviate the imbalances in each country.

- b) Women are asking for the chance to further develop their capacities, to strengthen their qualifications and be able to contribute to the problem solving at these levels- through, training grants, funding for recruitment campaigns, etc.
- c) Women who are already in high positions should find creative means to capitalize on their status and multiply opportunities for other, capable women to bring their ideas and solutions to the table as Ms. Calmy-Rey, the Swiss Foreign Minister has done in inviting all women foreign ministers together to discuss the issue of violence against women.

Finally, the culture of peace that is the goal of our development strategies is only possible in an environment of trust and cooperation. Barriers break down and cultures flourish when narrow self-interests give way to common goals and concerted efforts. The MDG's are a test of our seriousness as global peace- makers. Those who are making the sacrifices to fulfill their promises should be applauded. We all have to work harder to imagine familiar faces on those poverty statistics and to teach the same to our youth.
