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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review: implementing
the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard
to gender equality and the empowerment of women**

Statement submitted by the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights, 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 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.



Statement

The Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights welcomes the decision of the Economic and Social Council to devote the 2010 annual ministerial review to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

However, the Foundation notes with regret that, apart from the access of a handful of women to top positions, not only has very little progress been made since the adoption of the 2000 Millennium Declaration, but also that the resurgence of traditional values and practices in the service of political goals is threatening the gains already made.

As long as women do not enjoy the same rights as men to paid work, inheritance and education and continue to suffer from discrimination, they will never really be the equals of men nor will they be empowered.

The current financial crisis has made the situation of the people who are already vulnerable, including women, worse.

Furthermore, the Foundation notes with considerable concern the coordinated efforts being made by some States to give traditional values and practices precedence over human rights. The legitimization of outdated traditional practices, including stoning, the wearing of the full veil and repudiation, is also hampering vital reforms in some countries.

The public must be made to understand that such traditional values and practices are not merely symbolic; indeed, far from being an expression of freedom, they erect a wall that denies the “second sex” access to human rights in general.

In light of the foregoing, the Foundation proposes that:

(a) The ministerial declaration should draw the attention of international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to the need to introduce, in their negotiations with countries that request their assistance, clauses benefiting the women of those countries;

(b) The Council should, through the ministerial declaration, put an end to the recent efforts to legitimize traditional practices which would undermine any progress made in the area of women’s rights and prevent the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals;

(c) The ministerial declaration should promote a stronger role for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by adding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women new provisions that would:

(i) Explicitly state that the prior exhaustion of domestic remedies is not required;

(ii) Recognize the right of women’s rights NGOs to appeal not only on behalf of some victims but also against provisions of domestic legislation that create discrimination against the female gender as a whole;

(iii) Make the Committee’s decisions binding and give it the right to monitor their implementation by the States concerned;

(d) The ministerial declaration should recommend the establishment, under the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, of an ad hoc committee to study the criminal penalties of various countries that contravene human rights and humanitarian law, the bulk of which target women. Our goal should be to abolish all these penalties.
