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Statement submitted by Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 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/2011/100.

Statement*

In today's world, education is undoubtedly the most important strategy to improve an individual's well-being and society's socio-economic development. The importance of education has been highlighted by a number of international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations has articulated the Millennium Development Goals, which include goals for improved education, gender equality, and women's empowerment. Despite this, education for women continues to be a low priority and remains under-funded in most developing countries. Women and girls tend to receive fewer resources, less encouragement and little assistance in accessing their right to an education.

Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a leader of broad-based economic development in Bangladesh for businesswomen and industrialists, recognizes that women entrepreneurship indeed can bolster economic emancipation of women, promote gender balance and ultimately can lead to participation of women in broader decision-making and contribute to achieve the national economic development. But being successful as women entrepreneurs depends largely on the individual's capacity. Like most developing countries, women in Bangladesh have less access to education which is a pre-requirement for capacity-building. It also happens that gender biased preferences of parents and families tend to channel girls and women into more general fields rather than more technical and scientific education. As a result, women gain less relevant skills and knowledge which make it difficult for them to establish businesses, and are thus less likely to be successful. As a result, women who are courageous enough to take the initiative to start their own business in Bangladesh face problems with lack of access to higher value markets and lack of innovation. As most of these businesswomen are located in low value markets where there are few barriers to entry, it also makes them victims of market saturation and gives little room for growth. Therefore, gender inequality in education leads to bias in the development of skills and deprives women from acquiring needed capacity to do well in business. Even though women constitute half of the population, they remain the greatest unexploited resource in this country.

It is undeniable that education increases women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to the household and national income. We should recognize the reality that in the developing world, the fastest and most enduring means to end poverty is through empowering women and girls by educating them. Educated women with necessary skills and capacity can play vital roles in earning money and supporting the economy of their countries as well as their families. With this end in view, BWCC is firmly committed to creating a business-friendly environment to make women prosperous as well as make the world developed.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.