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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Statement submitted by RESO-Femmes, 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/2012/100.



Statement

Strengthening local leaders and their political empowerment in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

Our organization has launched a research and action project, which has been in operation for over five years thanks to the active contribution of our West African members and to our organization's many economic sacrifices with a view to promoting their political empowerment and freedom to innovate. The empowerment of African women is a lengthy undertaking that requires some knowledge of their concerns and, above all, professional experience with their environment.

Our leaders are trained to become human rights ambassadors and trainers. As the former, they promote political dialogue between groups in an attempt to include, and increase the accountability of, other beneficiaries, namely rural and peri-urban women. As the latter, they are responsible for carrying our programmes forward and ensuring their sustainability by working with isolated communities that have difficulty accessing water, sanitation and food.

Our leaders are trained to promote growth and development in the regions most affected by poverty and by lack of health services and access to vital resources. They respect the patterns of living, integrity and values of those concerned in order to provide them with the relevant services without harming the democratic and statutory balance of the most vulnerable population groups.

At the same time, our leaders are supported by a training programme on gender, empowerment and equality, which incorporates eight approaches based on the practices and general framework of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They, in turn, provide us with progress reports that are already the subject of numerous complaints by community representatives.

In addition to these complaints, we would like to stress that the approach taken in bilateral cooperation initiatives involving economic alliances between communities of the North and the South is detrimental to the latter. This approach restricts our groups' room for manoeuvre, the autonomy of their work and their efforts to promote decent and fulfilling work, all of which are encouraged by our programmes. These practices, which are associated with images and stereotypes that restrict our development opportunities and reduce women to mere community representatives, may ultimately prevent the real needs of communities from being met and exacerbate the violence to which our members are subjected.

We would like for the agenda to include the importance of taking preventative measures in areas such as the right to development and the rights of rural women, prior to the implementation of these projects, so that all the efforts of non-governmental organizations and, more broadly, of civil society and international bodies to achieve the MDGs and produce results for the region will not prove fruitless.