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Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 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.



Statement

We, the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2,200 members in 22 countries in both global North and South), together with many more people associated with our organization, have contributed to the progress being made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For over 230 years, we have had a presence among the most vulnerable people of the international community in a number of countries. Our time and energy have been invested primarily in education for women and girls, and later in health care and social services.

Today, in a number of countries, we are engaged in primary, secondary and tertiary education; adult education, mainly for women; as well as educating the public regarding the highly organized crime of trafficking in persons. In some countries we are involved in health care, care for disabled children, care for the mentally ill and care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Other initiatives include enabling sustainable living in response to local needs. Some of these include: being instrumental in forming participatory forums where women and children can have a say in matters that affect their lives; promoting organic gardening; encouraging small and medium enterprises; establishing social financing; organizing small-savings schemes; creating awareness on rainwater harvesting; helping to construct mini-dams; building capacity on renewable energy, such as solar energy; and joining hands with others in the conservation of endangered species.

In some countries, our presence is among undocumented women immigrants and their families to whom we offer community support services, helping them learn English and other skills for living in a different culture, including nutrition, and to navigate the social service systems. In other countries, family resource centres help to strengthen family life and relationships, which are at present greatly affected by the deep recession. In a few countries, training is offered in holistic energy therapy that helps women and families relieve the trauma and stress of poverty and violence.

In Zambia, with our help 60 rural widows constructed a dam made of anthill soil (not cement) to harvest rainwater, which now serves many villages as a reservoir for water that is used for cultivation and other purposes. Investing in the construction of a “well” created multiple interdependent benefits and helped to develop the whole town; people began investing in their gardens and sold the produce. Three taxis were bought, so the women no longer had to walk miles and consequently had time to make food to sell, enabling them to earn money so their children could go to school. There was enough savings to buy land and build a school. The well also provided water for the clinic, has improved hygiene and has enabled girls to go to school as toilets and privacy are now available.

We applaud the Global Education First Initiative launched by the Secretary-General which hopes to bring back to school the 57 million children left behind. In 2010, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council adopted the landmark resolutions [64/292](#) and [15/9](#), respectively, on the human right to water and sanitation. Access to water and sanitation are indispensable for women and girls. In 2013, International Year of Water Cooperation, 783 million people do not have access to clean water and almost 2.5 billion do not have access to adequate sanitation; women and girls often spend up to six hours every day fetching water.

In spite of the many efforts made by various stakeholders, the world is confronted with the numerous challenges of the multidimensional aspect of poverty. We witness the most vulnerable being affected by the austerity measures enacted by different Governments. For example, during this time of deep recession, the stresses on family life and relationships are greatly increased, causing an unprecedented growth in domestic violence and a corresponding growth in demand for the services of places of refuge. The Governments' response, to downgrade, close and decrease funding for such centres, greatly affects women.

During the current session of the General Assembly, at the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development, the special event on the Millennium Development Goals and other parallel events, the very people whose human rights were being violated told heart-rending stories. At the event "Human rights, environment and transnational corporations" organized on 24 September 2013 by the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations, we heard from Ecuadorian citizens themselves about the unjust practices of companies in the extractive industry (this event was webcast on UNTV). Recently, at the commemorative events at the United Nations on the International Day of the Girl Child and on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, we heard stories of discrimination told by a single mother with four children, by an indigenous girl, by an undocumented migrant girl and by women, men and girls who live in shelters in the United States of America. They are among the 1.2 billion people who are left behind in our world.

The report of the Secretary-General, "A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015" (A/68/202), drew inspiration from the many aspirations of thousands of people across the world expressed at the various consultations that have been taking place. The report stated very clearly what works and what has not worked, and made relevant proposals that can enable everyone to have a life of dignity.

We affirm the aspirational outcome document of the special event to follow up on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the Heads of State and Government and heads of delegation on 9 October 2013 (General Assembly resolution 68/6). We concur with the outcome document that all of us urgently need to work together in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the next two years.

The International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary wishes to propose the following as recommendations to help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target date, thus enabling a life of dignity for all. We call upon all Governments and the international community to ensure:

- Implementation of International Labour Organization Recommendation No. 202 concerning National Floors of Social Protection, which calls for nationally designed floors of social protection as one of the measures to ensure access to a rights- based approach to income security and basic social services for the most vulnerable of the society: the aged, the children, the disabled, the sick, the unemployed and the expectant mother.

- Implementation of the commitment made in the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals to improve educational opportunity and learning outcomes for the most vulnerable children by providing access to quality primary and secondary education
- Access to safe drinking water and sanitation by implementing the ground-breaking resolutions on human rights and access to water and sanitation in particular by investing adequate funds to provide more safe drinking water and sanitation, making sure that every village and community has access to a well or water project
- That the design of policies and programmes are informed by Human Rights Council resolution [21/11](#), in which the Council adopted the guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights
- That policies and programmes at the national level are implemented in coordination and in partnership with the civil society at all levels and with the participation of those who are left behind, in particular women and girls.
- Implementation of the Decent Work Agenda and the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization so as to enable full employment, ensuring inclusivity of and accessibility for women
- Ratification and enforcement of the human rights instruments, in particular those on women and girls
- Establishment of innovative sources of financing, particularly through the imposition of a financial transaction tax and a reduction in military spending
- Support for the initiative of the Government of Ecuador to establish a legally binding international regulatory framework for corporate social responsibility. We believe that such a framework would be instrumental in addressing the issue of various inequalities (income, gender, social, economic, ethnic) within and between countries
- The adoption by consensus of an outcome document at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women that would pave way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the next two years with the participation of civil society so that no one is left behind, especially women and girls.
