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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by Solar Cookers International, 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

Safe, sustainable, affordable cooking energy for food and potable water should be a post-2015 sustainable development goal to greatly improve the lives of the world's poorest.

Solar thermal cooking technology will positively affect many aspects of people's lives. Food, water, health, environmental sustainability, personal safety, time and funds for education and discretionary time are all benefits of solar thermal cooking and justify stating that access to renewable, safe and affordable household energy is a basic human right. Solar cooking should be given serious consideration by Member States and United Nations agencies because the costs are modest and the positive impact very great. Women and children in particular will benefit because the quality of food, fuel, water and health are intimately connected to their lives.

The solar cooking process is beneficial to many households, particularly refugee, poverty and community development situations, offering an opportunity for effective partnerships to improve the quality of life of the poor.

Utilizing a direct solar thermal process (non-photovoltaic) can provide vast benefits to the lives of one third of the people on Earth. More than 3 billion people, largely the world's poorest, are living in sun-rich, fuel-stressed regions. Currently, billions rely on low-grade organic fuels and polluting fossil fuels for daily household cooking and water pasteurization. Both organic and fossil fuels are non-sustainable at current levels of use, and dangerously contaminate the Earth's environment.

All eight Millennium Development Goals are positively ameliorated by employing solar thermal cooking: post-2015 planning should build on this basis.

Goal 1 — eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Solar thermal cooking does not require organic or fossil fuel and reduces the need for such fuels by at least 50 per cent. With training and supplementary technologies such as retained-heat cooking, savings can be significantly increased. Organic fuels such as wood and dung as well as fossil fuels such as gas and coal are relatively expensive, often costing up to 50 per cent of the family income. Cooking with sunlight during the day and using fuel efficient stoves sparingly (at night or during inclement weather) gives families options. Solar cooking allows families to cook better quality food, such as legumes and whole grains, which require a lot of fuel to cook. With savings, families can afford to provide better access to education and the ability to start micro-financed projects. Because contaminated drinking water is a major killer of women and children, the use of solar cooking for creating safe, pasteurized water is an especially significant benefit. Solar cookers can pasteurize water at 65 degrees Celsius (149 degrees Fahrenheit), eliminating many severe water-borne diseases. The cost of organic or fossil fuels for water purification is often prohibitive. Safe water at no cost should be a fundamental human right.

Goal 2 — achieve universal primary education. Children in poor regions are frequently assigned to gather biomass fuels for cooking, and to bring potable water from distant sources for the family. Solar cooking releases children from these responsibilities and school becomes possible.

Goal 3 — promote gender equality and empower women. Women and girls are frequently the primary providers of fuel and water. Women and girls are also the

main supervisors of food preparation. The time freed by solar thermal cooking technology is considerable. This time can be utilized for education or microfinance, including animal husbandry, cooking for sale and drying of food.

Goal 4 — reduce child mortality. Contaminated household air from cooking fires is a major cause of child morbidity and child fatalities worldwide. Contaminated drinking water is also a significant threat, resulting in significant deaths due to diarrhoeal disease. Affordable water pasteurization will reduce suffering and increase child survival rates.

Goal 5 — improved maternal health. High rates of cancer, pneumonia, tuberculosis, blindness and other life-threatening ailments are experienced by the poor. These dangers are greatly reduced with the reduction of contaminating household air. Access to more nutritional and affordable foods and safe drinking water improves maternal health, decreases high-risk pregnancies and is essential for family well-being. Solar cooking can permit families to purchase and cook high-quality foods and produce safe drinking water. When the mother is healthy, the well-being of a family is improved. Additionally, family cohesiveness and strength are more likely to thrive if pressure to obtain money to buy commercial fuels does not force male family members into urban centres.

Goal 6 — combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Solar thermal technology used to cook and pasteurize water frees family funds for improved medical care. Because solar thermal technology uses free sunlight, fuel savings translate to funds for malaria nets and better nutrition. Fuel savings reduce the need for family members to move to the city to earn money to buy processed fuels such as charcoal and liquefied petroleum gas. The incidence of sexually transmitted disease is reduced when the family can remain together.

Goal 7 — ensure environmental sustainability. Daily, one third of humanity depletes the environment using organic materials for cooking fires. Traditional fires release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and help destroy our ozone layer. One solar cooker saves approximately one ton of wood per year for a family. This saving also greatly reduces carbon emissions by 1.8 tons per year.

Goal 8 — develop a global partnership for development. Solar Cookers International works with other non-governmental organizations and Governments to introduce people to the multiple benefits of thermal solar cooking and train people in solar thermal technology for cooking, water pasteurization and business uses.

A basic human right

A basic human right to renewable, non-contaminating, freely replaceable fuel for the daily preparation of food and safe water without contaminating the environment is of global benefit. All people should have access to that right. Supplementary solar-based lighting and electricity would also be appropriate. A thorough, low cost and ecologically sound energy system for homes is recommended. Solar thermal technology is appropriate, accessible and affordable.

Most families in the world use several means of cooking daily. The introduction of solar thermal along with small fuel-efficient stoves that are used sparingly to reheat food and water, and retained-heat cooking with both technologies, is so beneficial it should not be bypassed.

Solar cooking is one of the few sources of energy that is truly non-contaminating, and is therefore of vital interest where the Earth's atmosphere and human environments are serious concerns.

Scientific research has greatly improved solar cooking devices. Improved designs and durability have improved the ease and efficiency of existing solar cookers. Newer models of solar cookers are readily usable in a greater range of climate regions and cook at a wide range of temperatures, from water pasteurization to stir-frying, grilling and baking. Examples of effective deployment of solar cooking today, at scale, are sanitizing hospital instruments in Nepal, cooking for schools and villages in India, running bakeries in Latin America and the deployment of more than 12,000 cookers currently at use feeding refugees from Darfur in a camp in Chad. Local manufacture is encouraged and increased and numerous designs are now available as prototypes.

Solar Cookers International offers solar cooking resources on the Internet that are accessible to the world. It serves the international network community dedicated to education and training for solar cooking and helps develop trainers who can provide understanding to best utilize solar thermal cookers to complement a wide variety of development projects around the world, increasing quality of life and benefiting people and the environment.
