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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to
the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Family Educational Services Foundation, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

In accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/CN.6/2015/3), the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals document, “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (the 2030 Agenda), we urge both a global review and a realistic outcome for development of empowerment for women and girls (including those marginalized with disabilities), especially within the framework of the Global South.

We re-emphasize the need for Member States, especially in the Global South, to accelerate full and effective implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals with monitoring and accountability, for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, as emphasized in the Political Declaration on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing +20) adopted at CSW59.

As highlighted at the 2011 United Nations General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation, we urge the need to include women, a segment that largely continues to be marginalized, in the political space. Once women have access, knowledge, and skillsets, their descriptive and formalistic inclusion in political space will result in eliminating “discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to healthcare and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.”

We urge the focus towards implementation required to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment by assessing key issues from the Political Declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference of Women (E/CN.6/2015/L.1):

- Enabling policy and legal environments
- Leadership and participation, including institutional mechanisms
- Financing and investing mechanisms
- Data and statistics (including monitoring and evaluation)
- Accountability mechanisms (for states, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders)

We affirm that the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women must be utilized as an established treaty body in monitoring and review of the State commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, especially commitments made to Goal 4 and 5. Additionally, their respective targets must be implemented in full compliance with the State obligations as defined by the widely ratified and binding Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Furthermore, we affirm that reservations made to any target or indicator falling under Goals 4 and 5 should not be predicated on cultural relativist positions or be justified by the claim of cultural sovereignty.

To this end, we subscribe to the language of Goal 4 and the targets there within, as we deem them aligned with Articles 5 and 10 of the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In

this regard, we are particularly keen on target 4.7, and are appreciative of the inclusion of language on “human rights”, “gender equality”, “promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence”, and “appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

On Goal 5, we wholly align ourselves with and subscribe to the language of the goal and the targets there within, and attribute much pertinence to targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.6. One concern we wish to express is the omission of the word “culture” before “practices” in target 5.3.

Our experience in advocating for women and girls has been that these thematic issues are highly sensitive for certain culturally and religiously conservative Member States. Insofar, we are disappointed about the lack of explicit mention of “culture” in this goal and its targets, and deem that this goal must be implemented in full accordance with the State obligations to the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. We affirm this goal and its targets delineate inalienable rights for women and girls, and should be upheld without reservation at the national level.

For the fulfilment of both Goals 4 and 5, we deem it absolutely necessary to engage inclusive and progressive organizations (especially faith-based communities in the Global South) to the end of affecting discriminatory attitudes against marginalized segments of society and in implementation paradigms for the Sustainable Development Goals.

To this end, Family Educational Services Foundation, along with other Pakistan affiliated development Non-Governmental Organizations, has launched Pakistan Sign Language, a 5000 word visual lexicon (in English and Urdu) that uses technology to bridge the communication gap for the deaf students; American Pakistan Foundation has launched Knowledge Platform which utilizes technology to match educational content with public school students; Muslim with Progressive Values has launched a flagship initiative entitled #ImamsForShe, which seeks to engage Muslim faith leaders in earnest dialogue and advocacy for gender equality and women’s empowerment; and Naya Jeevan has launched #DoctHers which seeks to bridge the gap between female homebased doctors and patients in need by leveraging technology.