



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
14 June 2019  
English  
Original: French

---

**2019 session**

26 July 2018–25 July 2019

Agenda item 5

**High-level segment**

**Written statement submitted by Association pour l'éducation,  
la santé et la promotion des femmes et des enfants au Cameroun  
(ESOFÉ), 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.

---

\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Written statement

In Africa, as elsewhere, the dowry is a form of selling human beings to which any woman seeking to marry is exposed. Some women succeed in their quest if the fiancé has sufficient financial resources to meet the requirements of his fiancée's family.

These requirements, which generally impoverish the fiancé, can cost millions of francs, depending on the region and the country. The exchange of a dowry compels the wife to obey her husband and, above all, to stay with him, because if she decides to leave the marriage for valid and just reasons, not only will she be unable to pay back the dowry, but she will also dishonour her family, which is usually unwilling to take her back. As the saying goes, marrying off a daughter means "one less mouth to feed at home".

In some regions, girls are married at the age of 6 and are allowed neither an education or a birth certificate. The less spent on them, the better.

Conclusion: Women's empowerment and participation in political, economic, social and cultural life will not be possible until the dowry – a form of slavery – has been abolished.

---