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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Graduate Women International, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, and Women’s Federation for World Peace International, non-governmental organizations 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

Women's Federation for World Peace International and the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations in general and special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council would like to commend the sixty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women for focusing on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. This review will include an assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The impact of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which has been significant over the last 25 years, places primary focus on measurable progress on the impact and success of the rights of women and girls throughout the world. Women's Federation for World Peace had 400 of its grassroots members, representing 17 national chapters, attending the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

The work of Women's Federation for World Peace has continued in over 80 countries since 1994. Through learning and studying the local culture, Women's Federation for World Peace has been able to assess the needs of the community and serve them in simple yet valuable ways. In our years of service to women's needs, rights, and conditions, we have found that it is necessary to include the entire community when creating efforts to raise women to a truly equal position.

For life, in any form, to flourish on the planet it is necessary to acknowledge the value of female and male participation. Reproduction is only possible through the support of female and male cells in all levels of creation. Thus, it is paramount to acknowledge that both female and male contributions are vital when considering a true gender-balanced world.

While many policies and popular trends were generated by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there is still quite a distance to travel to see gender equality realized. Every person needs to recognize their responsibility in promoting the empowerment of girls and young women, and it is vital to engage boys and young men in understanding why gender equality concerns them as well. By using and sharing their power and privilege, boys and young men have the ability to help shift the dominant norms and ideas about gender and masculinity by challenging beliefs, practices, institutions, and structures that drive inequality between men and women. Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Arab States, mentions that the seed of gender equality can only truly prosper when we break down the wall of resistance. Just as the seed can break the wall as it grows, so can the involvement of men and boys be the complementary power needed to finally realize a world of gender equality. It is necessary to address men and boys about their attitudes around equality, pushing them to reflect on their behaviour, knowing that this will push boundaries. It is unfair for all men to be seen as responsible for perpetrating violence or as custodians of inequality. To counteract that sentiment, men and women together must cooperate in creating a balanced and just society. It is fair to say that currently, women and men are both struggling to find a new ground where public and private roles and rights align.

Some cultures are more likely to encourage independence, achievement, self-confidence, and competitiveness in sons, and more expressivity, warmth, courtesy,

and care of others in daughters. During adolescence and young adulthood, female and male roles become increasingly segregated. Girls generally go through puberty from 9 to 13 years of age while boys are generally later, from 12 to 16. An outcome of a girl maturing earlier in many cultures can be an embarrassment, cause self-consciousness, and lower self-esteem. They can become more concerned with interpersonal relationships and with their physical appearance. Also, they may tend to be more accommodating and compliant in their interactions with others. It is notable to consider the strong influence that parents have on their child's power to impact the world outside of their homes. Cultural mores often differ from the in-home lifestyle. It dramatically impacts society when a child understands and acts on her or his responsibility outside the home to promote more gender-balanced habits, which may conflict with cultural mores. Malala Yousafzai became the youngest-ever Nobel laureate due to standing up for girls' education and then became a target of violence. Although the cultural norms in Pakistan did not value the education of a girl child, her father worked to give his daughter every opportunity a boy had through education, thereby giving her the vision and power to stand up for what she believed. Her action resulted in a global outcry for girls' rights to pursue an education.

Although gender equality is enshrined in constitutions across regions, laws on the books, and in practice, most countries offer greater rights and freedoms to men than women. Reports from the global community helped determine which men were more likely to support gender equality. It was found that in general, men with higher education and greater wealth, as well as those whose mothers had a positive view of education, could grasp a larger vision and see the possibilities of life in a gender-balanced society. Besides, if one's father carried out traditionally feminine household tasks, they were more likely to hold gender-equitable attitudes. While organizations that gather data and support educating men and boys are far fewer than those that serve women and girls, notable efforts are being made worldwide. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey in the Middle East and North Africa is the most extensive comparative study of men's views and experiences related to gender and gender equality ever undertaken in the region. This survey gathered data reflecting deeply embedded thinking that was the cultural norm. Many respondents freely shared their feelings of superiority and the need to control women and girls in their families. Every story of a man who compelled his daughter to marry against her will was countered by the opposite, men who empowered their daughters. Men who considered their jobs more important than their wives' or sisters' jobs were also countered with men who found women's work equal to their own. Yet, too many men continue to uphold norms that perpetuate violence against women or confine women to conventional roles. Among these are gender-based violence and sexual harassment in public spaces; honour maiming or killing; female circumcision; rape as a tool of war; and contempt of women in public positions. These attitudes and practices cause harm to all: women, children, and men.

Successful efforts in reaching full acceptance of gender equality in all domains are being made worldwide to address this issue. Promundo, an effort founded in Brazil in 1997, works to create a world free of violence and to promote gender equality by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls. Promundo's strategic partners attempt to achieve this mission by conducting applied research to build knowledge based on masculinities and gender equality, evaluating, and developing gender potential-enhancing interventions and creating innovative programmes. Promundo also participates and encourages national and international advocacy to promote gender equality and social justice.

UN-Women employ the LEAPs framework, a three-pillar approach that gives structure to bring about real change through: strengthening young women's leadership; promoting young women's economic empowerment and skills development; fostering

action to end violence against young women and girls; as well as three cross-cutting approaches, promoting partnerships with young women and their organizations, as well as partnering with young men in gender equality. It also invites the intergenerational partnership to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. This effort supports the notion that working with women and girls and educating men and boys in their portion of responsibility is a key component for gender equality to truly take hold.

Throughout her tenure with UN-Women, Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has brought to light the need to involve men and boys, the other half of humanity, as a game-changer in shifting power relations to end discrimination against women and achieve gender equality. During her inaugural speech at the MenEngage Global Symposium on 10 November 2014, she challenged the audience to use the Internet to support the #HeForShe movement not just with a click of a button, but by taking concrete actions in their daily lives. She emphasized the need for men to speak out against all forms of discrimination and sexism; take action to stop violence against women by refusing to be bystanders, denounce it, and to reject impunity; to say no to marrying young girls and speak out against those who do; to challenge themselves by sharing equitably in family, child, and elder care and household responsibilities, then finally to be positive role models in society and their families.

While many programmes and much of the research focus on women's rights, rural women in particular have expressed concern about the changes arising from such progress toward gender equality through giving them rights in theory but not in practice. Some women concur that such legal advances had made their lives worse, due to diminishing respect and care that men once showed them. Further, women in rural areas are more likely to find themselves unemployed than men (6.2 per cent in 2017 compared to 5.5 per cent for men, a difference of 0.7 percentage points). In emerging economies, the gap has widened from 0.5 points in 2007 to 0.7 points in 2017. By contrast, the gender gap has decreased to 1.8 points in developing countries and 0.5 points in developed countries, emphasizing that these rights cannot be recognized without the support of men. Studies reflect that when women work outside of the home they work fewer hours but, when they arrive home there are hours of domestic tasks to carry out, resulting in women working many more hours each day than men.

Non-government organizations occupy a privileged position as mediators between governments, therefore Women's Federation for World Peace International encourages Member States and civil society to enlist their support to reach out to all levels of society. Programmes must be provided that foster participation of men and boys in creating space where women can attain their equitable position. In addition, reach out to youth to foster transformation in their families, communities, and eventually ownership of the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres mentioned on International Women's Day, 7 March 2019, that although today's world and culture is male-dominated, it is evident that a fair and equitable balance between men and women will and can only be attained when women's rights are seen as human rights.

We the undersigned encourage governments and those in civil society to invest funds and collaborate with non-government organizations on the ground to acknowledge the vital role men and boys hold in realizing gender balance. Through strong commitment, communication, and collaboration between local governments and non-government organizations, gender equality can be realized.