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

Statement submitted by Centre for Women Studies and Intervention, 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

The Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) is a non-governmental organization based in Abuja, Nigeria dedicated to ensuring that women can live with freedom and dignity. By empowering and upholding the rights of women and the girl-child, CWSI aims to construct a just and equitable world. To do so, CWSI works with women and the girl-child to promote awareness in areas such as socio-economic empowerment, gender-based violence, women in governance, and human rights.

As we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic now is an opportunity to reexamine our priorities. CWSI has prioritized equitable access to education as it has become an issue of growing concern. As traditional forms of education were strained due to the pandemic, girls were the first to leave school and last to return. The government's distance learning programme has largely failed; just 10% of girls are accessing distance learning offered via television.

Access is not the only obstacle to achieving an equitable education system. The disparity in quality is just as pronounced as the disparity in attendance. Boys were more than twice as likely to have access to a private tutor during the pandemic. Even before the pandemic, boys were more likely to attend private schools due to social norms around "son preference." Due to the economic challenges posed by COVID-19, these private schools are a greater luxury and as economic resources dwindle it is even less likely that girls will have access to this higher quality education.

COVID-19 has allowed us to rethink the way we teach our children. New technologies have the potential to reach even more children than ever before. However, if we fail to ensure that these resources are being distributed equitably, the progress the world has made in combating inequality will be lost. CWSI remains committed to empowering women both economically and politically. Yet we can never achieve equitable and sustainable development if girls do not have access to the same educational opportunities as their brothers.

CWSI will focus on the following areas of critical concern in 2023, outlined based on the alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action. Our call to action, for the United Nations community, is in an effort to shed light on the critical need to acknowledge the re-emergence of barriers preventing equitable educational opportunities.

- **Education and the Training of Women** (Articles 10, 14, and 16 Goal 4): Centre for Women Studies and Intervention is ensuring the freedom and dignity of all women. Equitable access to education is the root from which so many barriers to this goal form.
 - o According to the BPFA (paragraph 69) non discriminatory education is an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Actions to be taken by different organizations and the government include:
 - Create a gender-sensitive educational system in order to ensure equal educational and training opportunities (Paragraph 80) ;
 - Take positive measures to increase the proportion of women gaining access to educational policy- and decision-making, particularly women teachers at all levels of education (Paragraph 83)
 - Remove legal, regulatory and social barriers, where appropriate, to sexual and reproductive health education within formal education programmes (paragraph 83)

- **Women and the economy** (Articles 14 and 11, Goals 8 and 9): Centre for Women Studies and Intervention is highly involved in solving issues that women face in regard to employment and aims to prepare women to be economically independent and empowered. The organization strives to provide support to women so that they become resilient and can engage effectively on the same balance with men.
 - o Although women participate in both the formal and informal economy, there are disproportionate challenges that women face when compared to men which makes it difficult for women to receive adequate pay and satisfactory work conditions (paragraph 150).
 - o According to BPFA (paragraph 166), non governmental organizations can enhance economic empowerment for women by encouraging community economic development strategies that build partnerships among governments, and encourage members of civil society to create jobs and address the social circumstances
- **Women in power and decision-making** (Articles 7, Goal 17): In order to address the exclusion of women from decision making, CWSI works with the Kogi Women Empowerment Coalition and the Ebonyi Women Empowerment Network in enhancing and promoting the participation of women in decision making and governance in Kogi and Ebonyi State. CWSI has also held various workshops throughout recent years centered around women in politics. The purpose of these workshops was to educate women about the importance and necessity of their involvement in local politics. In addition to having these workshops and having a wide coverage in awareness creation and grassroots support for women in politics, women who participated in these activities organized step-down training in their local areas.
 - o The BPFA declares that equality in decision making is necessary for the empowerment of women. Women and men should be able to participate equally in government policy making, as everyone has a right to take part in their government (paragraph 181).
- **Human rights of women** (Articles 3 and 2): In order to promote the rights of women, CWSI is interested in developing local education of human rights and gender sensitization. After organizing nation-wide workshops, The program department monitored areas in which CWSI had coverage in order to consolidate progress on the protection of the rights of women and girls in 5 project states.
 - o The BPFA establishes that human rights are fundamental freedoms which are to be granted to all human beings. Therefore, human rights ought to apply to everyone regardless of their gender. It is important for governments to recognize, protect, and promote the rights of women (paragraph 213).
- **The Girl-Child** (Articles 10 and 12, Goals 4 and 3): CWSI has held virtual and in-person sensitization engagements and workshops, in particular on International Women's Day in order to inspire the girl-child to learn about the SDGs and gender-based violence. These workshops are also held with the aim to inspire and encourage young girls to amplify their voices and take actions toward breaking down gender stereotypes that limit their lives.
 - o Discrimination against the Girl-Child is prominent and prevalent according to the BPFA (paragraph 260). Girls are often discriminated against at a young age due to their gender. These existing gender inequalities diminish the voices of girls and socialize them to believe they are inferior to boys. It is essential that girls are able to participate within their communities comfortably (paragraph 265).

Conclusion

CWSI recognizes the importance of women in the prosperity of our local communities, our nation, and our support in the empowerment of all women as well as the protection and development of the girl child. CWSI also has had tremendous involvement in advocacy addressing issues faced by women and girls.

CWSI calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women, and all relevant United Nations entities to commit to ensuring the Nigerian Government implement policies that protects the rights of women in a workplace environment, encourage balance between working life and family life; investment in the social care infrastructure and enhance women's access to productive assets, including property and financial and digital assets

CWSI calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women, and all relevant United Nations entities to commit to pressurizing the Nigerian parliament to adopt into law and implement the advocated Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB). The GEOB bill has key provisions to widen the space for women to occupy leadership positions while also address several forms of discrimination against women such as land ownership, inheritance, education, employment, and sexual and gender-based violence.

CWSI calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women, and all relevant United Nations entities to commit to ensuring the Nigerian Government domesticate the Protocol to the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, Review laws on women's property rights and all other laws discriminating against women, provide adequate budgetary allocations to issues that promote women's rights and bridge gender gaps in the country

CWSI calls upon the Commission on the Status of Women, UN Women, and all relevant United Nations entities to commit to ensuring the Nigerian Government intensify efforts in preventive and response systems for adolescent and young girls at risk of violence, commit to providing quality education by allocating adequate financing to the education sector which should in turn promote and emphasize the inclusion of adolescent and young girls in STEM subjects.
