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**INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND
THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**Written statement* submitted by the Hariri Foundation,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2005]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN
AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN LEBANON

1. Honorable Commissioner and members of the Commission, I thank you for affording the Hariri Foundation the opportunity to participate in this important session. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women through education is a goal that Lebanon takes most seriously. Indeed, closing the gap between female and male literacy rates in Lebanon, and achieving a significant increase in the rates of adult literacy, particularly that of women is of the highest priority for us. For more than 25 years, the Hariri Foundation has been at the forefront of the struggle in Lebanon to raise the standard of education and to promote higher education equally for women and men.
2. Following the Beijing World Conference on Women, the Lebanese Parliament established the National Commission for Lebanese Women in January 1996. NCLW was established as a national mechanism for women's advancement and gender equality, in compliance with global resolutions put forth during the Beijing conference. Situated at the highest level of government, the NCLW has a broad mandate for change, from national priority-setting, advocacy and awareness raising, monitoring, policy formulation, and legislative change.
3. One of NCLW's projects was the preparation of a report by Dr. Aman Kabbara Chaarani, Head of the Planning and Studies Committee, on the status of Lebanese women entitled "The Lebanese Women: Reality and Aspirations." It notes that the reality of the Lebanese woman is reflected in the active forces of development within society. The division of work and the fundamental values of Lebanese society all impact on the kind of opportunities women have at the different stages of their lives and define the role and responsibilities they must assume.
4. The report notes that in terms of economic activity, the labor participation of Lebanese women remains very low and women still tend to be regarded as the secondary breadwinner. In the early 1970's, many women who chose to enter the paid labor force were mainly found in the following professions: teaching, administrative work, nursing, handicrafts, sewing and textile industry, various services, as well as working the agricultural and trading fields.
5. The report continues that during the 1970s and the 1990s, women began moving into new and less traditional sectors. The proportion of women working in the following professions – law, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, law, banking and finance, the media, higher education, and research in the areas of literature, art and science – has increased considerably.
6. The report goes on to note that enrollment rates have increased in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. However, while the enrollment rate for women and men is almost equal, the range of careers available to women remains limited. Witness the low enrollment rate of girls in vocational education, and their enrollment compares minor in the faculties of mathematics, physics, sciences and chemistry.

7. On the level of civil action, the Lebanese women have demonstrated their presence and offered many important services. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the women's movement has marshaled its forces to promote social development and gender equality.
8. After participating in the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the official and civil committees formulated the Lebanese Women's National Strategy in 1996, identifying the main concerns of Lebanese women and their future advancement, and linking these efforts to the international development process.
9. The report then notes that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the aspirations and ambitions of the Lebanese women are numerous. Women are working to advance their cause in civil society, and to place it in the framework of comprehensive and integrated development, tied to human rights.
10. Listed in the report are some of the most important aspirations Lebanese women are pursuing:
 - To achieve important policies and measures for women and their families where the dignity of the family and motherhood requires balanced rights and obligations.
 - To empower women and promote their potentials through education, training, rehabilitation, and literacy. The Lebanese women have many ambitions, the most important being to enlarge the scope of education; to improve its levels; to implement compulsory and free education; and to encourage girls to enroll in technical, industrial, and agricultural fields. Once these ambitions are achieved, women will benefit from a greater equality of opportunities in work and production.
 - To participate in political decision-making. The real participation takes shape through mutual conviction – between men and women – in joint and integrated action; contributing to political decision-making; and influencing the decision making centers at all levels.
 - To formulate a media strategy to increase awareness of issues and priorities related to women's advancement and empowerment. The media participation and advocacy in the service of national development and the promotion of the women's role is a national cause and should be placed at the core of the educational, cultural, and economic policies.
 - To review legislation related to women and the family amending laws that continue to discriminate. It is necessary to amend some prejudiced laws, and reality confirms the profound gap prevailing among the various texts and legislation, and the effective practices vis-à-vis women. As some men and women are not adequately aware of women's rights stipulated in the legislation, laws, and international agreements, it is necessary to follow-up with legal education and awareness in order to amend existing laws and make new ones, as well as to change the traditional mentality.
 - To enable women to protect the environment and manage environmental resources.
 - To achieve gender equality in the economic sphere, especially as related to access to credit opportunities; benefiting from social funds; and creating a mechanism to face economic challenges and globalization's effects.
 - To establish and promote efficient institutional mechanisms and social awareness in order to find a solution to violence against women.

- To enhance the tenacity of the Lebanese woman; to strengthen her belief in her country; to support her belief in a just peace that respects the human being and the right to live with dignity and security.

11. Our recommendation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights:

The Hariri Foundation seeks the guidance and support from the United Nations on the integration of human rights of women in Lebanon and wishes to present recommendations made in an article, "The Role of United Nations Agencies in Women's Development in Lebanon" written by Ms. Rania Al-Abiad in *Al-Raida*, Volume XIX, Nos. 97-98 Spring/Summer 2002 published by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Lebanese American University.

- Improve the literacy and general education level of women, particularly rural women, through the initiation of illiteracy-fighting campaigns.
- Reduce the drop-out rate of women, particularly those from lower income levels, through the provision of incentives.
- Improve women's access to vocational training and continuing education, by facilitating their admissions to vocational institutions, as well as to institutions of higher education.
- Develop the quality of the education system whereby it disseminates gender-sensitive information and ensures the adoption of gender-sensitive curricula.
- Introduce mass communication programs that aim to change the attitudes of both sexes towards women.
- Act to ensure that the government establishes adequate measures to enforce compulsory and free education.
