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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by Legião da Boa Vontade, 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.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.



Statement

1. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held from 1 to 12 March 2010 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, will gather representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. The session will be a landmark for the evaluation of governmental and civil society efforts towards the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). The United Nations must demonstrate effective leadership in identifying and addressing discrimination against women in the 12 critical areas of concern: poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment and the girl child.

2. As a way of sharing good practices, Legião da Boa Vontade presents to Governments, organizations and participants at events its experience in the themes under debate and its activities to promote the eradication of violence against women. The organization supports women and girls by offering food and psychological, legal and social support and by contributing to family harmony through the transmission of universal values and raising awareness of the importance of living such values.

3. Legião da Boa Vontade was founded in Brazil by Alziro Zarur (1914-1979) on 1 January 1950 (World Peace Day); its president is the journalist José de Paiva Netto. It is a civil society non-profit association that promotes individual rights and has charitable, philanthropic, educational, cultural, philosophical, ecumenical and altruistic purposes. It is recognized in Brazil and abroad for its social and educational work.

4. As an international reference for education with ecumenical spirituality, it has collaborated, since its early days, on improving the quality of life of populations living in a situation of social and/or personal vulnerability, by means of programmes and awareness and social mobilization campaigns. The organization promotes the advancement of the human being and gives value to life by providing information to the media, schools and communities about subjects of general interest. In particular, it warns them about problems of violence in all social spheres and the urgency of taking effective measures to fight for a society that truly shows solidarity.

5. For 60 years, Legião da Boa Vontade has developed appropriate strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and the prevention of gender inequalities. With a history of best practices and its Solidary Society Network, which unites multiple stakeholders to contribute to the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals, the organization accelerates poverty reduction and reinforces the sustainable advancement of women in society.

6. The organization's socio-educational actions comprise basic education schools, community and educational centres and family and social reintegration homes. In these units, Legião da Boa Vontade supports women's sustainable economic growth and achievement, through the following programmes: Legião da Boa Vontade — Children: The future in the present!; Legião da Boa Vontade — Youth: The future in the present!; Legião da Boa Vontade — Sport is life!; training courses entitled

“Community Library” and “Charity Round”; and Women-BEING (baby citizen project).

7. Legião da Boa Vontade consolidates a comprehensive agenda that supports women’s empowerment in civil society and a just and fair standard of living for all: men, women, boys and girls. Its actions to improve the quality of life of humanity and the sustainability of our planet were underscored by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, during his visit to the organization’s facilities and day-care centres in Brazil:

“The affection, love and dedication of Legião da Boa Vontade with respect to these children make us believe that Brazil and the world can be much better, that it is possible to eradicate hunger, illiteracy and absolute poverty. I want to make known the work that is carried out here by the friends of Legião da Boa Vontade. (...) That is why I leave here amazed with the work carried out by you all. I leave Legião da Boa Vontade with the certainty that the word solidarity may yet become one of the keywords for us to recover our Brazil and transform it into a just and fraternal country, in which people live with far more love. (...) Legião da Boa Vontade is an example of life”.

8. Violence, a major anomaly in society, must be removed from within each person through re-education for peace and by introducing ethical, moral and spiritual values in the hearts of people. The child who is cared for and raised with these values will become an adult who is a builder of good and an activist for solidarity without borders. That is why the actions of Legião da Boa Vontade are based on a spirit of cooperation and guided by a spontaneous feeling of love for our fellow human beings, with a special emphasis on the family and its effective participation in society. All of its initiatives focus on education and the re-education of the individual, so that he or she can experience an ecumenical citizenship through the full exercise of global solidarity, which is beyond beliefs, disbeliefs, traditions or ethnic backgrounds. The organization’s flag is ecumenical and is based on the New Testament Commandment “Love one another as I have loved you” (Gospel according to John, 13:34), because love is the greatest force for promoting fraternity, companionship, equality, mutual respect and other essential values for coexistence.

9. In a study published in his book *Reflexões da Alma* (Reflections of the Soul), Paiva Netto, creator of the methodologies “Pedagogy of affection” and “Ecumenical citizen pedagogy”, states that: “The moral fragility of the world is so advanced that, in order to put an end to violence, there is only one strong medicine: the ascent of supportive fraternity, allied to justice, in education. That is why ecumenical teaching is a powerful antidote against aggressiveness. (...) To renew — with ardent solidarity or, in other words, with passion and compassion, goodwill and faith — is to shake up souls and awaken spirits, enlightening their conscience, without leading individuals to draw blood, to cause pain or to cause death. When I speak of love, I do not confuse it with the cowardly acceptance of that which is unethical. On the contrary, the exercise of love requires the perfect feeling of justice.”

10. All the work of Legião da Boa Vontade is carried out through its social and educational units (basic education schools, homes for children, adolescents and the elderly, and community and educational centres) and through awareness and social mobilization campaigns. What makes this work so different is the application of the “Pedagogy of affection” and the “Ecumenical citizen pedagogy” methodologies,

which spearhead the educational approach used on a daily basis, with great success, in the programmes developed by the organization throughout the country. Examples include the “Learning and Interaction”, “Baby Citizen” and “Professional Training” programmes, offered to women with different life stories, including depression, sexual abuse, domestic violence, early pregnancy and unemployment, are welcomed. Legião da Boa Vontade provides such women educational, technical and psychological support.

11. Legião da Boa Vontade implements projects that aim to create cooperatives and associations, in order to provide employment opportunities to women and thereby contribute to their financial independence; the projects are designed primarily for women who suffer domestic violence, so that they can free themselves from abuse. Through recycling and handicraft courses given at the organization’s educational and community centre in the city of Ribeirão Preto, State of São Paulo, women assisted by the organization created a company called AB Fomm Comércio e Confecções de Embalagens, which provides services to graphic companies in that region, producing shopping bags for stores, boxes and other cardboard products.

12. The Jesus Grammar School, operated by Legião da Boa Vontade in the city of Belém, State of Pará, in the heart of the Amazon region, daily receives hundreds of students who live in situations of social risk. Girls and boys between the ages of three and six remain in school full-time, in an environment where they are taught ethical and spiritual principles and are exposed to the “Pedagogy of Affection”. This educational method, which focuses on children up to 10 years of age, unites feeling and cognitive development, so that care and affection blend with knowledge in the students’ environments, including the school. Legião da Boa Vontade not only performs this kind of work with children, but also extends its social and educational activities to the families. Every month, the organization brings together the students’ parents, so that they can see the importance of family participation in their children’s education. The effects of this extensive work are very positive, especially for mothers, who report an improvement in family life. That is why the education professionals from the Jesus Grammar School are invited to present the subjects taught at the school to community schools and district associations in several localities in this part of the Amazon region.

13. One of the organization’s solutions to domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and girls is to encourage women and girls, through campaigns and inclusion programmes promoting “Education and culture with spirituality, so there may be food, security, health and work for everyone, to form the ecumenical citizen” (one of the organization’s mottos), which signals a new horizon. A person who receives instruction based on the concept of full citizenship will not accept ways of living that exclude harmony, understanding and an exchange of views.

14. The chain of connections that build up society begins with the family. A violent home produces deviations. Society must make every effort to eradicate every kind of violence, without delay. This is even more urgent in cases where the victim is a woman, as she is an educator of future generations and the one who directly maintains social order. For this reason, Legião da Boa Vontade launched, in 2009, a special edition of the goodwill magazine *The Strength of Women in Humanity*, paying tribute to those who have fought for and contributed to, a better world. The magazine also presents good practices and thematic discussions on ensuring gender

equality in the modern world. The following statement by the head of Legião da Boa Vontade, published in the magazine, is significant: “The role of women is so important that, even with all the obstacles produced by a male chauvinist culture, no organization that wishes to survive, whether it be religious, political, philosophical, scientific, business or family — can dismiss her support. Women, graced by divine breath, are the soul of everything, the soul of humanity, the good root, the basis of civilizations, the defence of human existence. What mother wishes to see her son or daughter die at war? Woe to us men, if it were not for elucidated, inspired and enlightened women!”
