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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by School Sisters of Notre Dame, 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.

* E/2010/100.

Statement

Remember the girls

The Economic and Social Council's review of progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is particularly relevant. Following on the heels of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which reviewed progress since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, it comes just weeks before the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, which will review progress in achieving the goals outlined in the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Unfortunately, progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and inadequate, particularly for girls. Their unique needs and concerns have been largely discounted or ignored. Marginalized in the discussion of women's rights and empowerment and too often ignored when children's rights and needs are considered, girls are often missing from international, national and local policy discussions and programme development. The results have been devastating for girls and their communities:

- As many as 100 million girls who would otherwise be expected to be alive are "missing" as a result of sex-selective abortions, infanticide or neglect
- Four million women and girls are bought and sold worldwide each year for marriage, prostitution, or slave labour
- More than 100 million girls under 18 years of age, some as young as 12, are expected to marry over the next decade
- Sixty-two million girls are not in primary school and 100 million more will fail to complete their primary education

Girls are missing from their homes, from their schools and from policy discussions at every level. Girls are seldom invited to the table where decisions are made and are often forgotten by those who make the law and develop Government policy. Too many girls are still silenced by their parents, out-shouted by their brothers, neglected by their teachers and forgotten by their Governments.

Please, remember the girls: they are your sisters, your daughters, your granddaughters; empower them:

- Education is the right of every girl and the key to transforming her life and her community. Remove all barriers to education for girls, including discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and curricula
- Women play critical roles in the life and well-being of their families and communities. Increase the competence of girls through education and training that includes social, political and economic empowerment
- The skills, ideas and energy of all girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, are vital for sustainable development. Promote the participation, visibility and empowerment of all girls by creating safe spaces for them to speak and to obtain assistance
- Families are healthier and communities stronger when girls are full participants. Strengthen the role of civil society, especially girls' organizations, in tackling gender stereotypes and ending discrimination.