



## Economic and Social Council

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### Substantive session of 2011

Geneva, 4-29 July 2011

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review**

### **Statement submitted by IFENDU for Women's Development, 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.

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\* E/2011/100.



## **Statement\***

IFENDU for Women's Development (IFENDU), based in Enugu, Nigeria, is a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2010. IFENDU envisions a new world order in which women and men are valued equally and work together as equal partners. IFENDU has since 2002 been contributing to the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 3 ("Promote gender equality and empower women"), through gender awareness training and sensitization programmes.

With a view to contributing to the ongoing review of the United Nations Development Agenda focusing on its education-related goals and objectives at the forthcoming high-level segment of the Council, to be held from 4 to 7 July 2011 in Geneva, we would like to make the following observations and recommendations:

### **Challenges**

Firstly, in our country, Nigeria, while free basic education is nominally in place, in reality many schools have devised various means of charging all kinds of dues, particularly in the more densely populated parts of the country, to enable the schools to function. The net result is that many boys and girls still stay out of school because of parents' inability to afford the cost of education. Many young people are still seen street-hawking when they should be in school.

Secondly, the social, cultural, political and economic climate in Nigeria (into which our graduates return) is still very largely anti-female, in spite of the excellent performance of some women who have been appointed into key leadership positions in recent times.

The Nigeria gender situation report for the Beijing+15 conference in 2010 in New York put general female participation at 10 per cent. Moreover, the 2010 Global Gender Gap Report, which ranks countries according to how close they are to achieving gender equality by examining four areas, namely, economic participation, education, health and political empowerment, ranks Nigeria quite low (118 out of 134 countries surveyed), whereas smaller African countries were ahead. Incidentally, those African countries are also members of the Commission on the Status of Women. Since Nigeria is a member of the United Nations Security Council but not a member of the Commission on the Status of Women, it is fair to conclude that Nigeria's government officials are quite abreast of security issues but are not sufficiently informed on gender issues, in spite of having a national gender policy in place.

### **Recommendations**

1. Nigeria should be made a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. It will strengthen and accelerate Nigeria's commitment to gender equality, which is, in turn, key to attaining the United Nations education-related goals. Its membership in the United Nations Security Council does not add up to anything for women's equality with men. Nigeria is large enough to belong to more than one United

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\* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

Nations committee. This is vital because of Nigeria's leadership role in Africa, which is in contradiction to its gender agenda trailing behind those countries it is supposedly leading.

2. Mandate Governments to enlist faith-based institutions engaged in education to update their knowledge towards gender equality.

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