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**Written statement* submitted by the Marangopoulos
Foundaton for Human Rights (MFHR), 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.

[24 August 2011]

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

The women's surname and gender equality

The Family Law of Greece has been entirely reformed in 1983. The article 1388 /1983 CC reads as follows:

1. Marriage does not change spouses' surname(s) with regard to their legal relations.
2. With regard to social relations, each spouse may use the other spouse's surname or add it to his/her own upon the other spouse's agreement.

The term 'social relations' (in French: 'relations mondaines') refers to social functions, e.g. an invitation to dinner; it was suggested by certain socially active gentlemen and was accepted as a means to achieve unanimity as to the essence of the provision, that is the legally recognised stability of women's surname.

The principle of article 1388 CC is very simple and original: all women will keep their name, just as all men do, irrespective of marriage, divorce or marital status in general, from the time of birth until their demise. In other words, the provision introduces complete equality between men and women, which corresponds to both the biological and the psychological truth of the matter. Moreover, it enables all women, most being professionally active today, to acquire a stable reference, thus facilitating their interaction with third parties, without any mix-up because of the not infrequent name changes due to changes in their personal status. A chameleon appearance in today's society is detrimental to the position of women. A professional woman is often obliged nowadays to continue using her (ex-) husband's name – either by depending on his goodwill or by securing that privilege by recourse to courts – a situation which, quite frankly, is not without risk for him as well.

In a nutshell, the stability of women's surname is beneficial to all:

- To women, because it ensures gender equality, their dignity and their professional interests by securing a constant personality and a stable identity;
- To third parties, because it renders secure their transactions with women, even their ex-husbands, who cannot continue to appear connected to the activities of their ex-wives.

Thus, this simple provision securing a stable and unchangeable surname for women, just as it happens with the surname of men, proved beneficial for all: women, men, the society at large, during the 25 years of its effective application in Greece.

And then suddenly a new law appeared in 2008 replacing this very satisfactory situation. Nevertheless, all Greek organisations protested for this change and expressed their full satisfaction with article 1388 C.C. of 1983, after 25 years of its application. Consequently, the current government is preparing the return of the formulation of article 1388 of 1983 on spouses' surnames. We think that it is worthy to promote this system in international level. It is undoubtedly promoting an increased gender equality not only in the family but in the whole status of women.