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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving
poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and
decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Action aides aux familles démunies, 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.



Statement

As we know, poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon. While it is not confined solely to least developed or poor countries, for the past several years it has had an impact on the political, economic and social development of women and children in third-world countries.

In the political arena, poverty reduction efforts have been marked by women's struggle to obtain equal rights with men. Today, in Africa and elsewhere, women hold seats in parliament and are leading entire Governments. They are business managers and the driving force behind a number of successful initiatives. The countries members of the African Union recently elected a woman as Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

On the economic front, women's efforts to reduce poverty have produced positive results. Women's literacy has been regarded as a prerequisite for development. The education of women in Africa has been reflected by an increase in girls' school enrolment. The gap between girls and boys has narrowed substantially. In many economic fields, women's clear desire to set up businesses has enabled them to obtain loans from banks or financial partners, although Governments' redistribution of resources has often been deplorable.

In the social sphere, women's efforts to reduce poverty have been beneficial in more ways than one. Issues such as maternal mortality and the resurgence of new diseases such as AIDS have led them to pressure Governments to invest in health care. According to a study published in the August 2010 edition of *Afrique Renouveau*, African countries allocate nearly 15 per cent of their budgets to health. Nevertheless, women continue to be the most vulnerable group in society. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, during the conflict between the Congolese armed forces and the opposition movement Congrès national pour la défense du peuple, by the time the civil strife reached its height in 2008, more than 220,000 people had been displaced, most of them women and children, according to the July 2010 Amnesty International report *Deadly Movements. Transportation Controls in the Arms Trade Treaty*. Human rights were violated through rape, torture, child abduction and the forcible recruitment of child soldiers. The progress made towards respect for women's rights was severely compromised in that country. It should also be noted that the effects of climate change are having an irrefutable impact on the development of the poorest countries, with women and children being the most vulnerable. According to experts, many unknowns remain in relation to global warming, particularly as regards how warm the planet will ultimately become, the pace at which climate change will advance, and the effects of global warming and their regional impact. Experts also claim that, in Africa, climate change will cause greater rainfall variability and worsening sea-level rises, which could in turn lead to the flooding of vast areas of land.

In the light of these conflicts and climate risks, which are beyond women's control, poverty reduction remains a challenge. Poverty and hunger have worsened in the poorest countries as a result of the recent global economic crisis, which began in the United States of America — a country which is considered to be the world's top economic Power.

To conclude, we appeal for peace in the world, unity among humankind and greater solidarity among countries. A great man once said that overcoming poverty entails escaping from famine, malnutrition, preventable disease and premature death, and enjoying the freedoms of literacy, open political participation and free expression.
