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Statement submitted by Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture, 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/2012/100.



Statement

The Foundation for Social Promotion of Culture is a non-governmental organization that since 1992 has been working in over 50 countries in Africa (Saharan and Northern), Asia (Southern and the Middle East), Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe (Eastern, Southern and Northern). In Latin America, it is present in Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Costa Rica, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, where it has executed 52 projects with over 23 local partners financed by different public and private institutions.

As noted in the United Nations *World Youth Report 2011* and elsewhere, young women are even more at risk of unemployment and underemployment than young men. For this reason, the Foundation has poured considerable resources into projects related to strengthening the capacity for work and entrepreneurship of underprivileged women entrepreneurs in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Paraguay, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Peru to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In this context, the Foundation has found that effective programmes of development cooperation should be based on a job-creation strategy that links economic and social development and the quality of human capital as one of the main factors of production, which is key to economic growth and productivity. Moreover, the increased liberalization of markets and the integration of societies in the global economy require a skilled workforce that is competent and possesses the practical skills demanded by the workplace. As employment is the main source of income in most households around the world, it can be said that the training of women for their subsequent incorporation into the labour market contributes significantly to reducing poverty and inequality.

The experience of the Foundation in several countries allowed it to observe that the shortage of low-income women entrepreneurs in productive activities is explained by several factors:

- Poor training owing to low levels of education in general
- A lack of stimulation owing to barriers in access to financial and marketing networks and the like, resulting in low productivity
- The social prejudice of being a woman associated with the difficulties in reconciling family responsibilities with production often result in low self-esteem and conformity

Today's youth "attach value to vocational education as a means for job preparedness, though find inadequate opportunities to access it" concluded the *World Youth Report 2011*. The Foundation addresses this problem by supporting the establishment of technical training centres and operating as a platform for creating an environment conducive to the business development initiatives led by women.

Comprehensive training is provided, including technical knowledge aimed at empowering women. Such empowerment should lead to either integration by means of paid employment or the creation of microenterprises.

Along these lines, for 20 years, the Foundation has supported local organizations that have implemented technical training initiatives for poor women

through formal and informal education. The technical training centres serve more than 4,000 women a year through their various training programmes. These vocational training programmes are linked to the productive sectors of each country. It should be noted that the programmes have helped to improve the design and content of vocational education in the countries of operation.

The beneficiaries of these actions are poor women who seek a quality technical education that will ensure access to employment. Most of the women come from rural areas, having migrated from rural to urban areas in search of better living conditions, but their insufficient basic education, language difficulties, customs and way of life itself hinder them from achieving full social integration. In the technical training centres, training schemes pay special attention to this reality. Beneficiaries also come from the target population of women living in the suburbs of large cities, who, having completed high school, are often in the informal labour market in jobs that cannot be considered to be decent or worthy.

The Foundation provides financial and technical support for the development of activities that strengthen the strategy for working with local partners, and it encourages networking and the transfer of good practice. Therefore, since 2005, the Foundation has promoted, together with local partners, the creation of a network of development non-governmental organizations of Latin American countries and Spain. The network currently includes member organizations of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Spain.

Examples of partnership are:

- In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Foundation has worked since 2006 with the Centro de Formación Integral para la Mujer (CEFIM) Technical Institute, which offers professional training each year to 350 poor women from El Alto and La Paz. Recently, the Committee on Education and Health of the Chamber of Deputies of the Plurinational State of Bolivia awarded CEFIM the distinction of Meritorious Institution in providing services to education and vocational training. Also recently, CEFIM has received approval from the Technical Higher Level.
- In Paraguay, the Foundation has worked since 1998 with the Association for the Promotion of Craftswomen and Working Women (PROMU), with different groups of projects for very poor people in the slums of Asunción, including El Bañado, Tacumbú, Botánico, Santa Rosa, and so forth. In its School for the Training of Service Company Assistants (EFAES), about 350 women graduate each year in the school. This project was selected by the OPEC Fund for International Development as one of the most successful projects for its results.
- In Guatemala, the Foundation has worked since 2003 with the vocational training centre Las Gravileas, an organization sponsored by the Association for Cooperative Education, mainly to train indigenous women who are most affected by poverty in the Sacatepéquez region, with a catchment area covering the regions of Escuintla, Chimaltenango, Solola, Quetzaltenango and Guatemala. The centre has facilities for developing training programmes in such areas as baking, confectionery, candy, jellies and jams, textiles,

dressmaking and ceramics. It also runs a programme for the organization and management of production solidarity groups.

- In Peru, the Foundation has worked continuously since 1992, having executed a total of 16 projects in priority sectors such as education and training, with a special emphasis on training women and setting up businesses in rural areas to develop the agricultural and rural sector through the introduction of new techniques and products. It has worked primarily with the “Condoray” Vocational Training Centre for Women in hospitality and microenterprise development in the Valley of Cañete and in marginal areas of Lima. These programmes benefit 1,200 women annually.
- In the Dominican Republic, the Foundation has worked since 2000 with the local organization Initiatives for Higher and Further Education (INDESCO) in the Jarabacoa area, a region with great potential for employment in the tourism sector. It has supported the creation of the Highlands School for Training in Hospitality and Travel Services. To date, about 1,000 women benefit from this project each year. The project has the support and collaboration of important institutions of the country, notably: the Instituto Nacional de Formación Técnico Profesional, the Government agency that coordinates and oversees technical training programmes; the Dominican Association for the Advancement of Women; and Women’s World Banking, which have provided support and advice in the development of various programmes.

One of the great challenges of policies to promote quality employment is the incorporation of the most disadvantaged social groups, especially women. In order to achieve their integration into the labour market, increased productivity in rural and marginalized sectors dominated by women has been sought by providing updated training to women and their access to information and communications technologies.

Certainly, and for its proximity to the most disadvantaged groups, the development of NGOs can complement public policies providing innovations and satisfying deficiencies or absences of state services. Although the Foundation has always given prominence to civil society and local organizations in the design and implementation of development actions, it believes that cooperative work is effective only if local policies take priority and the social fabric is strengthened.
