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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by International Alliance of Women, 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

Effects of the economic crisis on gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon of epidemic proportions prevalent in many families, communities, societies and cultures across the globe.

Ending violence against women is not a luxury for times of growth. It is even more crucial in times of crisis when women are hit very hard.

The ongoing financial crisis that has engulfed almost the entire world in an economic recession poses threats to gains in gender equality and reducing poverty and, in fact, to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.

Economic equality is a key factor in preventing gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence, since economic crises increase gender imbalances in the economy and expose women and girls to a greater risk of violence.

The current crisis has a greater differentiated impact on women because their economic position at the start of the crisis was not equal to that of men. Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable jobs, to be underemployed or without a job, to lack social protection and to have limited access to and control over economic and financial resources.

There is strong evidence of clear links between violence and unemployment, violence and homelessness, and violence and inadequate housing.

There is also strong evidence that, as resources become scarcer owing to greater demand, relations among household members and also within neighbourhoods become strained. The social fabric is often torn by increased crime, family abandonment by heads of households and rising domestic and community violence.

Economic crises increase particularly harmful forms of violence against women, namely trafficking and prostitution. They increase existing pressures on poor women to enter the sex trade in order to support their families.

If the crisis leads to increased school dropout rates, children or their families may resort to prostitution as a livelihood strategy.

In addition to increased levels of violence, austerity measures that encompass public budget cuts affect support services, leaving women victims of violence even more vulnerable than usual. Such cuts have led to reduced police, legal, health and other essential services for victims.

There is therefore an urgent need to analyse the deep-rooted causes of the crisis and work to advance an alternative vision of development grounded in human rights and gender equality.

The current financial crisis is a consequence of the failure of the governance of finance. Finance has been allowed to grow too big compared to the real economy.

Money and returns on money, rather than the provision of goods and services, have become the ultimate purpose of the economy. Financial governance is gendered because there is a large underrepresentation of women in financial decision-making.

Recovery plans and structural adjustment programmes have not integrated a gender perspective.

In the light of the above considerations, we call upon the United Nations, national Governments and regional governing bodies to evaluate the global financial architecture and its actors on the basis of the human rights framework, taking into account all relevant human rights conventions.

We further call upon the United Nations, national Governments and regional governing bodies to take immediate action and implement the following measures in order to rectify the gender impact of the crisis:

- (a) Undertake systematic gender-sensitive analysis of the causes of the crisis, its impact on women and the responses thereto;
- (b) Implement gender budgeting as a standard methodology of all public budget processes;
- (c) Implement measures to combat the ongoing process of feminization of poverty, which is exacerbated by the recession;
- (d) Create jobs, especially in the public sector, by investing in social infrastructure (education, health care, childcare and care of dependants), which would also ease the disproportionate burden on women to enable them to participate in the labour market;
- (e) Take measures concerning the equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making in the political, economic and financial sectors, as well as in private companies;
- (f) Take strong measures to combat all forms of violence against women, including financing support services for women victims of violence;
- (g) Implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the landmark Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security, and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Women of the world should become more vocal about the need to move towards a justice-oriented economic order that would promote gender equality and human rights and put an end to the constant search for unlimited growth and maximum profits to the detriment of the survival of humanity.
