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Statement submitted by Forum Azzahrae pour la femme marocaine, 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

[Original: Arabic]

We are making this statement as part of our participation in the work of the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will focus on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. Although we commend the efforts made in that regard, we would like to point out that much remains to be done, particularly given that there are many kinds of gender-based violence, including psychological, physical, verbal and sexual abuse.

Violence against women has become a global phenomenon, and there is an increasing sense of despair and a lack of compassion and religious principles. This phenomenon is not isolated to a single culture; it is a problem that plagues all cultures, whether Eastern or Western, backwards or modern.

When women are subjected to systematic violence, they lose their humanity, which is a blessing from God, and when they lose their humanity, they cannot play a constructive role in life. It is the right of every person not to be subjected to violence and to be treated on the basis of equality with others. This right, which is one of the most fundamental human rights, embodies the truth and essence of human existence, and it is this right that completes and elevates the human condition. When those rights are violated, our humanity is diminished. Life will not go along its normal course if women's fundamental rights, the most important of which are the rights to life, security and dignity, are sacrificed. Violence or the threat thereof kills creativity by creating a climate of fear and terror that follows women wherever they go.

Addressing violence, including personal and domestic violence, violence that results from misguided customs and violence committed by authorities, requires the formulation of culturally and socially relevant laws that would enable women to pursue legal remedies, demand compensation, have access to education and health care, and enjoy protection from States and non-governmental organizations. Doing so would ensure that violence is not perpetuated and that society continues to develop.

Instead of simply responding to the consequences of violence, public policies aimed at countering violence must identify and address the real reasons for violence against women. We will not be able to respond to this phenomenon unless we identify its root causes and address them. Those causes are poverty, illiteracy and drugs. We would like to draw attention to a form of violence against women which is increasing exponentially and that efforts have failed to curb. Sexual violence, the ugliest form of which is the trafficking of women, occurs before the eyes of the international community, yet it does not take decisive action to curb a form of slavery that continues to exist in the third millennium.

Countering violence requires an integrated effort, including by enacting laws, offering judicial protection, changing social attitudes and fostering economic growth, political stability and democracy. In that connection, we suggest that the United Nations should adopt a policy to protect women against violence not through fixed-term campaigns, the inefficacy of which has been proven, but, rather, by reconciling cultural attitudes and building awareness. In that connection, we would like to draw attention to the role of the media in reinforcing the stereotype of women.