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**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 Women’s Federation for World Peace International, 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

One of the greatest achievements of the period since the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and the global consensus to commit to the Millennium Development Goals has been the engagement and mobilization of women towards the fulfilment of those targets. Using their creativity, talent and tenacity, when called upon women explained their needs and demonstrated that it was important for the world to tap this neglected resource. But the exercise has also been important for building the capacity and self-esteem of girls and women, as they are now being called upon more and more to contribute to peacebuilding and development, leading to the emergence of an unlimited resource for advocacy and cooperation.

In May 2013, Women's Federation for World Peace held its seventeenth Women's Conference on Peace in the Middle East with the theme "Empowering women and fostering universal values for a culture of peace". Debates over three days among the 80 women leaders and experts from throughout the Middle East North Africa region were serious. A university professor from Saudi Arabia launched a discussion about the effects of radicalization and terrorism on individuals and families throughout the region. She described how she and her husband were able to turn their son around at a single moment in his life when he was in danger of being pulled into fanaticism at university and, she added, there were many stories like hers.

Looking at the way the media reports on these issues, or at statistics alone, it is very hard to understand how such things can happen. If one cannot understand why and how, it is impossible to take precautions. One feels helpless and cannot act. Terrorism cannot be prevented by government decree or United Nations resolutions alone. Through the testimony of one mother and the ensuing discussions, everyone present could understand easily how such things happen. It is not so different from the way a child might be tempted to steal or cheat, with the difference being that the consequences are more dramatic and often irreversible.

As she described it to us, if the mother is alert or if the parents are united and actively involved, there are moments in the life of a child when a parent can see that something is not going well and might catch the change in behaviour or attitude. There are known, recognizable signs which Governments and the United Nations could help parents recognize and, if caught early, parents can very probably win back their child's trust and turn the situation around. But if the parents are not attentive, or if they are fighting or not caring, those moments are missed, and then something may go very wrong. There are simple, but potentially very far-reaching, solutions that the United Nations and Governments need to know.

As is done each year, the agreed-upon conclusions of that conference were taken back to local communities and Governments in the region by the participants in order to encourage and focus their work. A communiqué was issued after the meeting highlighting the five areas of concern. The conference agreed that there was a need to:

(a) Create greater solidarity among women through networking, sharing success stories, promoting role models through advocacy and capacity-building and through the use of social media;

(b) Engage men and youth within families and in communities to end a culture of violence;

(c) Call on women to claim their position in the socioeconomic and political spheres and engage with men in peacebuilding and development;

(d) Call on mothers to realize their full potential as agents of peace; protecting their families, preventing radicalization and other social epidemics, and transmitting values to empower their children to become fully responsible citizens and contributors to a culture of peace;

(e) Engage youth in educational campaigns about protecting and appreciating the idea of “cultural heritage”, stressing the inclusion of cultures other than their own.

Another story comes from our annual international conference, held in London in October 2013, with the theme “Finding the vision and way forward to transform ourselves, protect our families and build a culture of peace”. One element of this annual gathering is the sharing of reports from all regions, including those of over 100 national chapters describing developments in their activities and programmes. Each year, it is exciting and very hopeful to see the ways in which women are influencing their communities, especially when they find empowerment within the context of the global development and peace agendas. One story comes from the Philippines, and illustrates the effects of a young woman bringing back to her remote hometown the tools and knowledge gained by working as a representative of a non-governmental organization in New York, with a particular focus on the Millennium Development Goals.

This woman, after gaining the trust of some of the resident civil society and local government leaders, is in the process of “selling” a vision for recreating the entire village in accordance with what she learned was possible. She is providing creative educational incentives in the form of scholarships and is collaborating with the women and youth in rooting out systemic corrupt practices such as vote-buying, and is emphasizing the necessity and urgency of village-wide cooperation to promote interdependence and common prosperity. She uses the celebration of United Nations days for community-building and training youth and women for leadership according to a plan that they created together for their future. She found a winning combination in the vision and core values of her organization’s mission statement, her love for and commitment to her people, and the strategies, tools and instruments learned through her experience with the work of the United Nations.

Women and their civil society organizations have found something very practical and very noble in the vision and plans of action provided by the Millennium Development Goals. It has not just been about women helping women, but women changing the world, influencing those changes with elements unique to daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, who are often missing in leadership. The strength of the Goals has been their ability to lift citizens from their local existence and connect them to a global paradigm and, consequently, a sense of ownership of the institution and mandate of the United Nations. The success of the post-2015 development agenda depends absolutely on expanding that engagement.

Historic resolutions sparked by Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) have opened the way for other commitments that further define and encourage the participation of women in policy and decision-making. Most recently, in July 2013, in Geneva, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2013/16 on

mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. General recommendation No. 30 adopted in October 2013 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women primarily aims to provide authoritative guidance to States parties on legislative, policy and other measures on the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. But serious thought must continue to be given to connecting these commitments to the furthest villages and those girls and women waiting for the same wake-up call as was seen in some of the national action plans on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

Enough cannot be said about how women are engaged in and resolving difficult challenges in their families and communities, usually without titles or recompense. We give resounding appreciation to United Nations research institutes and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Both are systematizing data and sharing the proof of what our local experiences have told. How much more encouraged these women at the grass roots are and will continue to be if they are able to understand that their home-grown solutions are being recognized at the United Nations.

Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been a beacon of hope in the realization of women's empowerment and of rights and dignity for all. As it so rightly explains, not only are there duties to the community, but the full development of anyone's personality is only possible through one's investment in the betterment of their community and the world. This is a critical step that girls and women can take to rise from under the heavy weight of victimhood. Few girls and women have been afforded that opportunity through the ages, and that availability of that chance is currently triggering an explosion of talent and brilliant civic engagement.

To summarize, women, now more than ever, have the possibility to claim their place in the paradigm shift, but it will not happen automatically and it may not happen to the fullest of its potential if there is no clear plan that engages commitment at all levels. Clearly, women cannot access the great scheme of global problem-solving and development as victims. The current Secretary-General has made great efforts within the United Nations system to promote women's empowerment and systematically include women in leadership and decision-making, which encourages women's resolve. But that needs to find its way to every corner of every village, and that is the responsibility of States and those partners who recognize the importance of the moment in history that is now upon us.

In view of the foregoing, we make the following recommendations:

1. Women should be aware of their rights and their unique capacities to respond to local and global needs, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development goals.
2. Women should participate in decisions that affect their lives, learning leadership from childhood, when they already recognize the paradigm of feminine leadership in their mothers.
3. The United Nations, Governments, institutions, non-governmental organizations and the media should cooperate with families to educate women about their rights and duties.

4. Best practices, especially those involving national and local applications of specific resolutions (e.g., Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)) and agreed goals (e.g., the Millennium Development Goals) should be better disseminated throughout civil society.

5. Peace and development in society cannot be achieved without feminine qualities in leadership; therefore, the community should support women in strengthening those qualities.

6. Human rights and peace education should be prioritized as part of standard school curricula and coordinated with informal education at home, as a guide to the attitudes and behaviour needed by responsible global citizens.

7. Women have the responsibility to assess their own portion of responsibility for failed policy and governance at all levels, and to rise from victims to leaders.

8. Gender roles are influenced by socialization, yet existing innate values of feminine and masculine dignity can best be discovered through parental role models; therefore, appropriate training in parenting skills should be made accessible.

As projections are being framed for the post-2015 period, strategic involvement by women more than doubles our chances for success.
