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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 Women in Europe for a Common Future, 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

Moving from rhetoric towards real inclusion of gender equality and women's human rights in the final push for the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015/sustainable development agenda

Women in Europe for a Common Future submits the present statement with the aim of contributing to the priority theme of the session on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls, and as input to the post-2015/sustainable development agenda.

The Women's Major Group, created as a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, coordinates the input and participation of women's and feminist organizations in the United Nations processes on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda (see www.womenrio20.org). For both areas of action, the Women's Major Group is convinced that without a transformative shift in the way that gender equality and women's human rights and justice are addressed, a truly sustainable post-2015 development agenda will not be achieved.

The Women's Major Group asks for a "stand-alone gender equality and women's human rights goal" in the post-2015 development agenda, as well as having gender-equality priorities in all goals and dimensions of sustainable development, including specifically as part of the means of implementation. In view of the fact that the Millennium Development Goals have not been reached, with goals 3 and 5 being especially off-track, a strong push is urgently needed and priority should be placed on achieving gender equality, women's human rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, with the full involvement of local women's rights organizations and movements.

To this end, links should be created among the various multilateral processes taking place, including the efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the negotiation of the sustainable development goals/post-2015 agenda, climate change negotiations, population and development negotiations (International Conference on Population and Development) and financing for development; attention should be paid to means of external implementation such as through the discussions on trade and finance within the World Trade Organization, the Group of Twenty and the Group of Eight.

While we appreciate the references to the importance of a human rights framework for the new development agenda (in, among others, the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (General Assembly resolution [68/6](#)), the report of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the report of the Secretary-General "A life of dignity for all" ([A/68/202](#) and Corr.1)), we feel that this must go further. The new global development paradigm must be rights-based, holistic, inclusive, just and gender-just, equitable and universal.

The post-2015 agenda should also aim at eradicating poverty through social justice and gender justice, addressing rising inequalities and women's human rights, including respecting, protecting and fulfilling sexual and reproductive rights, with

special to attention to ensuring access to comprehensive and universal sexuality and reproductive health education, information and services.

We are concerned at the lack of proposals for concrete financing mechanisms and means of implementation, both for accelerating progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and for the sustainable development goals/post-2015 development agenda. We therefore call for explicit attention to monitoring and accountability frameworks and recognition of the need to address systemic global development systems, including restructuring the global financial system through transformation of the international financial institutions, combating tax-dodging and tax evasion, achieving an official development assistance level of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product, and using a financial transaction tax for development purposes, among others.

Finally, we call for a meaningful, inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process with the full engagement of civil society and social movements, including the participation of diverse women's movements, feminists and gender-justice activists, especially those from the economic South, at all stages of negotiations. Too often in negotiations have women's rights been traded away for gains on other issues. We do not want to let that happen again. We call for access to all meetings, formal and informal, where the new development framework is being decided.

In conclusion, we summarize our proposals as follows:

(a) On the call for a human rights framework: the work to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals needs to be based on the specific and already agreed upon international human rights instruments and mechanisms. This includes implementation of already agreed upon international agreements such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development and the key actions for its further implementation (General Assembly resolution S-21/2); the Beijing Platform for Action; the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006;

(b) On achieving gender equality and women's empowerment: the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment should be at the heart of the development agenda. We ask for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's human rights in the post-2015 development agenda, as well as gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in all dimensions of sustainable development, including clear and transformative targets, sufficient allocated resources, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

(c) On participation and principles: build on internationally agreed development and environmental sustainability goals, including all the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including the precautionary principle and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; and on existing national, regional and global accountability mechanisms within the United Nations human rights system. The post-2015 agenda

should also ensure meaningful, consistent and systematic participation by civil society organizations and youth from the Global South, particularly those women and girls living in poverty;

(d) On sustainability: ensuring intergenerational equity is imperative. This requires fully engaging women and men in formulating rights-based, ecosystem-based, gender-responsive and socially just solutions to halt biodiversity loss and climate change, which stand as symbols of a global focus on short-term gains and unsustainable consumption and production patterns and impede poverty eradication;

(e) On economic models: a sustainable and equitable economy that accepts the limits of growth and consumerism is crucial. Transforming the current development model and reformulating the economic model and indicators to reflect the value of people and women's unpaid care work are equally crucial as it challenges the current economic patriarchal, unsustainable and extractivist model of development. This also means ensuring equal access to full and decent employment and binding human rights-based regulatory mechanisms to keep private sector and businesses accountable. It also means recognizing and learning from alternative visions of development that put people and the planet's well-being at the centre. One of the most significant macroeconomic alternatives would be implementing just and progressive tax systems that favour the poor over corporations and using the resources earned for public services;

(f) On education: more priority should be given to the underlying socioeconomic, cultural and political causes of low enrolment and completion rates among girls. Comprehensive education on human sexuality that gives children and young people the life skills they need to understand their bodies and their rights should be offered in and out of schools;

(g) On security: the women, peace and security agenda should be a core concern and highlighted in the post-2015 agenda. Achieving gender equality and women's human rights, including the right to full and equal participation in decision-making, including during peace processes, is intrinsic to peace and security and sustainable development. This implies full implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and an alternative approach to conflict-affected areas, focusing on the root causes of conflict and threats to human security, sexual harassment in the workplace and violence against women.

We call for prioritization of:

(a) Women's economic autonomy and gender justice: not only stopping the feminization of poverty or working to eradicate poverty, but transforming macroeconomic structures, restructuring the global financial architecture, taking into account and redistributing women's unpaid care work, changing role models, building equality and social justice and ensuring that women have access to and control of economic resources;

(b) Women's political autonomy and full citizenship: working for parity of participation at all levels and ensuring women's participation across the broad spectrum of formal and informal decision-making institutions, not limited to quota systems; further ensuring that participation is central to building democracy and ensuring women's full citizenship and fundamental human rights;

(c) Women's freedom from all forms of violence: whether perpetrated by State-sponsored actors, private actors or by family members, violence remains one of the most pervasive barriers to women's full enjoyment of their human rights. Any effective intervention needs to address violence against women and accelerate its full eradication;

(d) Women's sexual autonomy and gender equality: women must have the freedom to express their sexuality free from violence, coercion and discrimination. Women should have access to universal and equitable sexual and reproductive health education, information and services and receive social support without stigma or discrimination;

(e) Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights: without the ability and freedom to control their bodies, lives and sexuality, the full range of women's human rights cannot be achieved. Ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights must be explicit aims in the post-2015 sustainable development framework.
