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**Coordination, programme and other questions:
tobacco or health**

Statement submitted by African Women's Association, 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.



Statement

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, highlighted the difficulties for remote communities to access basic health care.

We have unfortunately noticed that all the different initiatives to achieve the Millennium Development Goals are channelled through the public sector, which suffers from poor accountability and inefficient strategies for ensuring that rural communities also benefit from the programmes.

With respect to the efforts that sub-Saharan States, and Cameroon in particular, have made over the past decades, basic health care and access to health services remain a concern. The health system is weaker in rural areas than in cities. Today, the quality of health services is generally low. Outside the major cities, health facilities are often dirty and underequipped. The health system in Cameroon has been allocated a fund of 5 per cent of the gross domestic product to improve the health infrastructure and services. For the period 2011-2015, a new strategy is being implemented to improve the quantity and quality of health services provided to the population.

The communities and non-governmental organizations such as the African Women’s Association are still waiting to see the benefits of this new strategy of health financing.

The African Women’s Association is a local non-governmental organization based in Cameroon that supports remote communities with projects focused on livelihoods, education and human rights. Together with the development community, it recognizes that rural communities play an important role in the economic development of the country. While their contribution to the development agenda of the country is expected to grow, such communities suffer physically and need increased efforts to receive adequate health services.

Following the policy of Cameroon of making health services accessible to all, particularly to remote communities, the African Women’s Association has taken the step of supporting community-based health service campaigns. As part of one campaign, it has invited all community members to get free medical consultations with general practitioners and specialists. This project is very successful and has achieved great outcomes and had an impact on the health status of these communities. The demand has increased significantly from the beginning of this project: so far, 25 communities are expecting to be included in the health campaign.

The African Women’s Association seeks a wider audience after talks held with Government agents, to share two ways of tackling health challenges.

In line with the focus of the Economic and Social Council, in 2013, on promoting health and access to essential drugs, the African Women’s Association hereby submits its approach to supporting Government efforts through:

(a) The organization of regular health campaigns by recruiting a rotating health team that will cover remote areas to provide quality health services. This process has the advantage of hiring health specialists based in urban areas to support rural communities. A wider campaign could address some issues of the health

services. During these campaigns, medical consultations will be free for the treatment of common diseases;

(b) The contracting of local health attendants to improve their competencies and skills to assist Government health workers in the provision of basic health services. Traditional health workers could also benefit from receiving training refresher courses.
