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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”**

Statement submitted by Global Fund for 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

An exponential increase in investments is urgently needed in civil society to dramatically advance women's and girls' human rights

Evidence gathered by the Global Fund for Women supports the view that strong movements led by women's civil society organizations can effect changes in policies and laws while improving the situation for women and girls on the ground. Both are crucial to achieving gender equality. To accelerate this course, we need an exponential and sustained increase in funding for the women's movement at the civil society level. Local needs are intensifying but investment is not.

There is a critical need for a sustained increase in resources for civil society organizations that are working to achieve the following:

(a) Ending gender-based violence. Violence against women, in all its dimensions, is increasing. It is critical to support women's organizations that are working to address the societal norms and attitudes that are the root causes of gender based violence. It is also vital to fund women's groups that provide support and safety to the millions of women and girls who are raped, violated and maimed so that we do not lose another generation of women. In particular, a massive injection of funding is required for the development of focused strategies to address domestic violence, sexual violence in conflict and the continued prevalence of such harmful traditional practices as honour killings, female genital mutilation and forced marriage;

(b) Economic and political empowerment. Continued efforts to elevate women's economic and political participation, including leadership, are critical. Supporting women's groups in their advocacy for policies and laws that ensure women's equal access to resources, including financing, land, food and water, should be prioritized. It is critical to invest in women's organizations that are focused on achieving women's access, free of intimidation, to safe, secure and fairly paid work. These efforts must embrace comprehensive strategies to end both the trafficking in women and girls and their forced labour;

(c) Sexual and reproductive health and rights. A dramatic increase in funding is required to support women's groups in their advocacy, services and work in support of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights. This includes working to ensure that existing rights are not eroded. Future policies and practices must embrace the autonomy of women's reproductive and sexual choices, as well as women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services, education and information. There is an urgent need for coordinated and committed civil society funding mechanisms to support the advancement of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health rights in all regions. Endemic maternal mortality and HIV prevalence among women are issues that need particular attention.

In addition to prioritizing the three areas listed above, the Global Fund sees the following cross-cutting objectives as currently critical to gender equality:

(a) Women's and girls' access to and control of technology. The world is undergoing a rapid technology revolution and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields are increasingly central to elevating the prospects of individuals, communities and nations. Yet women and girls are being left behind,

with dire consequences for gender equality and social innovation. The Global Fund calls for a systematic and urgent focus on engaging women and girls as users, shapers and leaders within the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It believes that an equal world depends on women and girls having equal access to and control over technology. To this end, we call upon Governments and the United Nations to ensure that women and girls are at the centre of the science and technology revolution. This includes removing structural barriers to the meaningful use of technology, including information and communications technology, increasing investment in girls' science and technology education and ensuring women's and girls' full participation as leaders and innovators in science and technology;

(b) Focus on girls. Girls' needs, and the issues they face, require nuanced approaches that differ from those used to address women's rights. We advocate for girl-specific strategies and investments that recognize the different needs of girls with regard to information, education, services and political, social, economic and technological leadership, in order for girls to realize fully their human rights.
