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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 World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

At this historic juncture in 2015, on the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, and on the eve of the assessment of the Millennium Development Goals and their re-framing as Sustainable Development Goals for post-2015, we support the United Nations Economic and Social Council's efforts to assess the progress that has been made towards the implementation of the promises of Beijing. We also hope that the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will serve to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are the focus and the very heart of the discussions, strategies and negotiations.

We concur with the overarching concern that global poverty be reduced, since poverty affects women intimately, leads to their disempowerment and heightens their exposure to violence of all kinds. While there has been notable progress for women, power-sharing is an area that still needs much improvement; and no problem seems more urgent than the unabated violence that affects women and girls of all ages in all countries of the world. Violations of women's human rights continue with impunity and without the victims' recourse to protection in much of the world.

As a world federation of women's organizations identifying with the common denominator of our Ukrainian heritage and working in countries found throughout the region embraced by the Economic Council of Europe, we welcome the regional review process underway in Geneva beginning in early November 2014. We urge women from states in this region, which includes Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, to analyse and make public the effects that the recent events in Ukraine have had on women there, including displacement, disruption of work and education, impoverishment, and concurrent medical and social problems.

The recent and ongoing conflict was initiated by the March 2014 illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory — the Crimean Peninsula — by the Russian Federation, soon followed by military invasion into the region of eastern Ukraine by Russian Federation forces with the intent of bolstering Russian-supported separatists. These actions served to inflame rather than defuse the conflict, which has not de-escalated.

Military aggression against Ukraine was preceded by a period of a social and cultural offensive conducted through Russian-based and Russian government owned and supported media, available in many of Ukraine's regions. Over the past two years, Russia has waged a media war to derail Ukraine's intentions of integrating with Western institutions. Through this campaign, the Russian Federation portrays itself as a bastion of morality against Western decadence and seeks to impose a redefinition of the economic, political and social discourse, according to Russian gender politics. In particular, we note an attack on "gender" through a massive disinformation media campaign, targeting Ukraine's civil society, especially its most promising voices, namely those of organized women.

Women were equal partners with men in the Maidan protests during the winter of 2013-2014, and in the subsequent evolution of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity against corruption. Once the undeclared war began, women became a minority among the troops engaged in active military combat. They are, however, a disproportionate majority of citizens displaced by the conflict. Women dominate

among those displaced from the war zone in eastern Ukraine. They are also a majority of those displaced from Crimea.

One of the most tragic aspects of the ongoing crisis is the internal displacement of Ukraine's indigenous people, the Crimean Tatars, who opposed Russia's invasion of the Crimean peninsula and the subsequent pseudo-referendum. They have fled from Russian persecution in large numbers to the Ukrainian mainland. There must be official acknowledgement of their status as forcibly displaced persons, as members of a forcibly displaced community, and of the impact of this violence on their circumstances.

In addition, throughout Ukraine, it is women — mothers and wives and children of soldiers — who bear the brunt of the aftermath of this conflict, caring for the injured and traumatized. Also, women in the Ukrainian diaspora worldwide are involved in significant humanitarian activism to bring aid to affected families and Ukraine's health care institutions that are stressed beyond their capabilities.

There seems little room within this war effort for discussion of how a society can practice non-violent resistance to foreign aggression on one's own soil. Despite a desire for peace and reconciliation, those loyal to the Ukrainian state can only support Ukraine's right to defend its own borders. Yet, on the 14th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we continue to yearn for clear guidelines and measures consonant with support for Women, Peace and Security. In knowing that there are areas of the world where the recognition of women's strengths and the inclusion of women in post-conflict planning have resulted in a more positive future for their societies, we strongly believe these examples should be emulated.

We urge the inclusion of Ukraine in every agenda focusing on women striving for equal rights. In addition to promoting the participation of women in policy-making negotiations, we advocate the continuation of efforts to strengthen civil society as a whole by fostering engagement with political leadership so that there is accountability not only within the United Nations Security Council but also among all national governments of United Nations Member States.
