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Statement submitted by Femmes solidaires, 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

Sustainable development: the future of the world is in the hands of women

The climate crisis is particularly hard on women: it impoverishes them, further marginalizes them and kills many more women than men. Of course, it is not the climate that is sexist: the structural inequalities on which our laws are based maintain women in a position of vulnerability aggravated by the disruption of their environment.

Women are weakened by the subordinate position in which they are kept and by the family violence inflicted on them. Each year many of them die at the hand of an (ex)partner. Millions of them live in fear and violence, which endanger not only their health and their lives but also their ability to adapt to climate change and to take the necessary measures in the event of a climate disaster. During cyclone Gorky in 1991 in Bangladesh, 90 per cent of the 135,000 victims were women. One of the reasons given for this figure was that women have to be accompanied by a male family member when they go out. The fact that women are not allowed to work without the permission of a male family member, to spend their earnings as they want and to have access to a decent education makes it impossible to mobilize all possible efforts to combat climate change and adopt permanent adaptation solutions. Changes are needed for the future of women as much as for that of the planet.

The deterioration of precious common goods such as water and nature also affects women first of all. They have to walk further and further to fetch wood and to find the water necessary to their survival and that of their family. Water pollution is also a serious problem. Femmes solidaires is working in the Afar region on several development and solidarity projects. Dangerous chemicals (pesticides from cotton mills and biofuels from sugar cane plantations) are being dumped with impunity in the waters of the Awash River, which is the only river in this region. Bacteria proliferate and endanger everyone's health and particularly the health of young people. The population is being poisoned a little more each day. The responsibility of the polluters must be clearly established in order to achieve sustainable development. Local initiatives by women deserve every possible support and women must systematically be equal partners with men in negotiations and decision-making. This must of course occur at all levels, including international gatherings, which unfortunately do not always set an example.