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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia, 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

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia is a women's association created in Barcelona in 2001. Its main activities are inspired by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are also based on the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As its name indicates, its main goal is to enable women to develop in freedom, in a democratic environment and with equal opportunities.

The year 2015 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by 189 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women. This United Nations conference marked a turning-point in women's rights, since it incorporates earlier instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Platform listed 12 critical areas of concern in efforts to achieve gender equity and described the measures needed to eliminate the obstacles to the advancement of women. And although it is not a legally binding instrument for non-ratifying States, it provides political guidance to governments, institutions and nongovernmental organizations. The Declaration recognizes that the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women are effective ways of combating poverty, hunger and disease and of stimulating truly sustainable development.

In 2015, the deadline expired for achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals derived from the Millennium Declaration. As experience has shown, the specific deadlines and measurable indicators were a valuable benchmark for monitoring and reporting progress and results achieved. Although not all the Goals could be achieved, significant progress was made in various respects. For this reason, it was decided to continue the work with the Sustainable Development Goals which the United Nations set as part of the new sustainable development agenda. That agenda, introduced at the Summit on Sustainable Development held in New York in September 2015, is to conclude the work and guarantee that current needs can be met without jeopardizing the resources of future generations.

As regards the priority theme for the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia considers that women are essential actors for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality is not only an end in itself: it is the way to achieve the intergenerational equity mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals, since there can be no fair and equal society when part of the population is experiencing continuing inequalities compared with the opposite sex. Violence against women, rooted in these discrepancies, is therefore one of the biggest obstacles to the sustainable development of our society. For this reason, to promote the empowerment of women is to end the structural and symbolic violence that are reflected in the lack of recognition and specific resources and are obstructing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia supports all efforts to reduce violence against women and believes that a strong international legal framework is needed in order to effectively combat gender inequality. We consider that the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence can provide the best framework to fill the legal vacuum

existing in the various national and international legal texts. Although ratification and adoption of the Istanbul Convention will not mean that the Sustainable Development Goals are immediately attained, they will represent a big step in this direction.

For this reason, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia

- Reaffirms the commitment to guarantee that girls and women can fully enjoy human rights as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
 - Requests assurances that, in all law enforcement proceedings, sufficient resources will be available to deal effectively with acts of violence against women and girls and respond to them swiftly and with understanding and respect and to ensure that such acts are prosecutable.
 - Proposes that training programmes on gender equality should be encouraged as a basic means of creating the climate of respect leading to real equality of opportunity.
 - Promotes the empowerment of women in the three areas on which sustainable development is based: social, economic and environmental.
 - Requests the United Nations to endorse the Istanbul Convention.
 - Requests all member countries to ratify and adopt the Istanbul Convention.
 - Urges consolidation of the progress achieved under the Millennium Goals and decisive movement towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - Emphasizes that violation of the rights of girls and women is a major obstacle to the achievement of freedom, democracy, peace and the right to exercise civic rights, in addition to the injustice and cruelty which it represents.
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