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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 “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”.**Statement submitted by members of the Working Group on Girls: ANTICIPATE 200 WORDS FOR THIS**

LIST IN FORMATION ---- non-governmental organizations 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**Promises Made To Girls**

In 2008, the agreed conclusions from the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)¹ reaffirmed the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including Section L, whereby governments committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against girls, publicly acknowledged that the advancement of women is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls, and highlighted the importance of policies and strategies to improve the situation of those in rural areas.² They also reiterated that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world, and stressed that the growing feminization of poverty and achieving

¹ Agreed conclusions on financing gender equality and the empowerment of women:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/agreedconclusions.html#52>

² *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (UN publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other internationally agreed development goals, requires investing sufficient resources for gender equality and empowerment.

The need for equal access to education and health services, gainful employment, decision-making, and productive resources (e.g., land, capital, credit, technology) for rural girls and women was also emphasized in the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (2000). It noted the large number of rural women working in the informal economy, with low levels of income, little job and social security, and discriminatory land and inheritance rights.³ It also called upon Governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all policies and budgetary processes to support gender equality and empowerment.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁴ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),⁵ including their Optional Protocols, are noteworthy treaties designed to protect the human rights of the girl child. CEDAW's Article 14, which focuses on rural girls and women, calls on States parties to ensure that they have the same rights as men and boys.

The 56th session of the CSW offers a unique opportunity for Member states to evaluate implementation of the agreed conclusions from CSW52, and to examine the empowerment of rural girls and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. The Working Group on Girls (WGG) encourages the CSW to review progress, provide policy guidance, and ensure the empowerment of all girls, including those in rural and urban areas, in order to ensure the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Promises Broken and Other Human Rights Violations

Despite decades of treaties, laws, resolutions, statements, meetings and promises, the well-being of girls remains lagging behind boys.⁶ Research indicates that girls begin life from a position of disadvantage which continues throughout their life-span, although inequalities in access to opportunities, resources and services, including education, health and protection are significantly greater as they approach adolescence.^{7,8} The situation is particularly dire for girls in rural areas, who are routinely denied the resources that they need to break the poverty cycle as a result of discriminatory cultural practices,

³ General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex

⁴ UN: United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the rights of the child*. www.unicef.org/crc (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378)

⁵ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

⁶ (a) UNICEF (2011, Sept.). *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle: Sex-disaggregated Data on a Selection of Well-Being Indicators, from Early Childhood to Young Adulthood*. http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Gender_hi_res.pdf ; (b) UNICEF. (2010, September). *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*. http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

⁷ (a) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children 2011: Adolescence-An age of opportunity*.

www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php; (b) The U.N. Interagency Task Force on Adolescent Girls. (2009). *Girl Power and Potential: A Joint Programming Framework for Fulfilling the Rights of Marginalized Adolescent Girls*. <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2011/UNGirlsJointFrameworkpdf.pdf>; (c) UNICEF (2011, September 13). *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle: Sex-disaggregated Data on a Selection of Well-Being Indicators, from Early Childhood to Young Adulthood*. http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Gender_hi_res.pdf ; (d) UNICEF. (2010, September). *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*. http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

⁸ UNFPA & UNICEF (2011) GET

property and inheritance laws, and access to technology and services.⁹ In addition, the rural environment is one of extreme poverty; overall, 70% of the 1.4 billion extremely poor (living on less than \$1.25 a day) in the developing world living in rural areas.¹⁰

The cultural preference for sons, due to prevailing beliefs that boys bring more prestige or wealth to a family than girls, has resulted in over 100 million missing girls due to female foeticide, infanticide, malnutrition and neglect.¹¹ In addition, only 50% of children under five living in the developing world were registered at birth,¹² with substantial differences between children in rural and urban areas (34% vs. 59% in Africa; 28% vs. 52% in Sub-Saharan Africa; 24% vs. 41% in Least Developed Countries; 37% vs. 60% in Asia).¹³ As they grow, rural girls are more likely than their urban peers to manifest delayed growth and development,¹⁴ to show evidence of anemia and iron deficiency,¹⁵ and to be deficient in Vitamin D.¹⁶ In some countries (e.g., Mali, Senegal, Ghana), rates of anemia among adolescent girls (15 – 19) exceed 60%.¹⁷ Finally, girls face significant barriers to health care.¹⁸

As a consequence of prevailing gender roles and their associated obligations, commitments, and expectations, girls' educational, social, and economic opportunities are hampered.¹⁹ Girls, for example, are obliged to devote an unequal share of time to activities associated with both unpaid personal care work (e.g., children, the sick and the elderly) and care-related activities (e.g., fetching water and firewood, food processing and preparation, cleaning and washing).²⁰ And despite the fact that education

⁹ (a) The U.N. Interagency Task Force on Adolescent Girls. (2009). *Girl Power and Potential: A Joint Programming Framework for Fulfilling the Rights of Marginalized Adolescent Girls*.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2011/UNGirlsJointFrameworkpdf.pdf>; (b) United Nations (2008). *Women 2000 and Beyond. Rural Women in a Changing World: Opportunities and Challenges*. NY; (c) Plan International. (2009). *Because I am a girl: The state of the world's girls*; (c) UNICEF (2009). *State of the World's Children: 2009*

¹⁰ Poverty remains a massive and predominantly rural phenomenon. (GA66, 2011).

¹¹ Population Reference Bureau [PRB] (2011). The world's women and girls 2011 data sheet.

<http://www.prb.org/pdf11/world-women-girls-2011-data-sheet.pdf> (p. 4).

¹² UNICEF, 2011, (June). Child protection from Violence, Exploitation and Abuse: A Statistical Snapshot.

http://www.childinfo.org/files/ChildProtection_from_violence_exploitation_abuse.pdf

¹³ UNICEF. (2010, September). Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity.

http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

¹⁴ Pawloski, L. R. (2002), Growth and development of adolescent girls from the Segou Region of Mali (West Africa). *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 117: 364–372. doi: 10.1002/ajpa.10037

¹⁵ Vasanthi, Fawashe, Susie, Sujatha, & Raman (1994). Iron nutritional status of adolescent girls from rural area and urban slum. *Indian Pediatrics*, 31, 127 – 132. (<http://www.indianpediatrics.net/feb1994/127.pdf>)

¹⁶ Sahu, M., Bhatia, V., Aggarwal, A., Rawat, V., Saxena, P., Pandey, A. and Das, V. (2009), Vitamin D deficiency in rural girls and pregnant women despite abundant sunshine in northern India. *Clinical Endocrinology*, 70: 680–684. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2265.2008.03360.x

¹⁷ (a) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author.

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>; (b) UNICEF. (2010, September). *Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity*. http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

¹⁸ United Nations (2008). *Women2000 and Beyond. Rural Women in a Changing World: Opportunities and Challenges*. New York.

¹⁹ UNICEF (2011, September 13). *Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle: Sex-disaggregated Data on a Selection of Well-Being Indicators, from Early Childhood to Young Adulthood*.

²⁰ (a) UNDP policy brief, (2009, October) “Unpaid care work”, *Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction* series No. 1, http://content.undp.org/go/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=3231016; (b) Levine, R., Lloyd, C. B., Greene, M., & Grown, C. (2009). *Girls count: A global investment and action agenda*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development; (c) Plan International (2007). *Because I am a girl: The state of the world's girls*; Plan International (2009). *Because I am a girl: The state of the world's girls*; (d) UNICEF (2010). *Beijing 15: Bringing girls into focus*;

yields many long-term benefits, including later marriage and greater opportunity to gain the skills to make a decent living, girls' are more likely than boys²² to be denied their human right to basic literacy and education,²³ especially at the secondary and tertiary levels.²⁴ The situation is even more dire for members of ethnic or racial minorities, girls who live in poverty, and rural girls.^{25,26} Structural barriers in rural areas include the poor electricity supply in some communities,²⁷ distance (some live way up in the mountains and there is no transportation to schools), danger walking home after dark, and girls' responsibilities helping their families earn a living.²⁸ In one study, 66% of 12-16 girls in rural areas attended secondary school, compared with 84% of their peers in urban areas; only 43% of young rural women between the ages of 20 and 24 had finished secondary school compared to 58% of their male peers.²⁹

At the onset of puberty, or even before, some girls are forced into marriage, ending their education, limiting their freedom, and increasing their risk of domestic violence,³⁰ adverse pregnancy outcomes, and HIV infection.³¹ Early pregnancy and complications in childbirth result in 70,000 deaths annually. In the poorest regions of the world (mostly rural), 35% of girls are married before the age of 18; levels range from 45% in South Central Asia to nearly 40% in sub-Saharan Africa, to 25% in Latin America and the Caribbean.³² In some countries (e.g., Niger, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Bangladesh) more than 60% of girls are married before age 18. Girls in rural areas have some of the highest rates of maternal mortality, obstetric

²¹ substantially reducing time for school and play; (e) FAO, IFAD, ILO. www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1638e/i1638e.pdf

²² (a) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author.

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>; (b) UNICEF. (2010, September). Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity. http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

²³ UNICEF. (2010, September). Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity.

http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

²⁴ (a) Singh, K. (2011, April 18). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education to the Human Rights Council. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/17session/A-HRC-17-29.pdf>; (b) Plan International (2007). *Because I am a girl: The state of the world's girls*; Plan International (2009). *Because I am a girl: The state of the world's girls*; (c) UNICEF (2010). Beijing 15: Bringing girls into focus; (d) Levine, R., Lloyd, C. B., Greene, M., & Grown, C. (2009). *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda: A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls*. Levine, R., Lloyd, C. B., Greene, M., & Grown, C. (2009). *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda: A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls*. Levine, R., Lloyd, C. B., Greene, M., & Grown, C. (2009). *Girls Count: A Global Investment & Action Agenda: A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls*. www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/sites/default/files/Girls_Count_2009.pdf.

²⁵<http://www.womensenews.org/story/education/110509/solar-lamps-brighten-schools-indian-teens>;

²⁶ (a) Connelly, R., & Zheng, Z. (2003). Determinants of school enrollment and completion of 10 to 18 year olds in China. *Economics of Education Review*, 22(4), 379 – 388). [rural girls are particularly disadvantaged in terms of both enrollment and graduation rates compared to their urban peers ...] (b) United Nations (2010). *The World's Women 2010*. New York [And gender disparities are far more severe in countries with greater rural and poor populations.

²⁷ <http://www.womensenews.org/story/education/110509/solar-lamps-brighten-schools-indian-teens>

²⁸ <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=54508>

²⁹ UNICEF. (2010, September). Progress for Children: Achieving the MDGs with Equity.

http://www.unicef.org/protection/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf

³⁰ UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author.

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>

³¹ (a) Temin, M. & Levine, R. (2009). *Start with a Girl: A New Agenda for Global Health: A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls*. www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/start_with_a_girl (p. 14); (b) UNICEF, 2011, June). Child protection from Violence, Exploitation and Abuse: A Statistical Snapshot.

http://www.childinfo.org/files/ChildProtection__from_violence_exploitation_abuse.pdf; (c) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author.

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>

³² Population Reference Bureau [PRB] (2011). The world's women and girls 2011 data sheet. <http://www.prb.org/pdf11/world-women-girls-2011-data-sheet.pdf> (p. 4).

fistula,³³ and violence, while access to services, law enforcement, and legal protection remains limited or non-existent.³⁴

The rural environment is also characterized by limited access to decent work, widespread unemployment, poor quality jobs, low pay, absence of labour rights, inadequate social protection, and a lack of a representative voice.³⁵ These structural barriers are exacerbated for rural girls due to their lack of education and training, inadequate transportation, and constraints due to unequal care and household responsibilities.^{36,37} As a result, rural girls tend to be employed in the more precarious forms of informal employment, including domestic work, where they face numerous health risks, including abuse by both the women and men in the household.³⁸ Girls in rural areas, and particularly those from ethnic minority areas, are particularly vulnerable to being recruited to work far from home, with false promises of decent and legitimate work with high earnings, and are subsequently trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation³⁹ At least 1.8 million children are exploited in commercial sex or pornography worldwide, the vast majority of them being girls.⁴⁰

Recommendations

To improve the conditions of girls in rural areas, we urge Member States to:

1. PROMOTE A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY

Strengthen the implementation of all existing commitments, in particular the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), including Article 14 which focus on those in rural communities, and the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,⁴¹ in particular Section L. Monitoring progress in the implementation of these recommendations should be a priority in all efforts to improve the situation for girls and promote gender equality.

³³ United Nations (2008). *Women2000 and Beyond. Rural Women in a Changing World: Opportunities and Challenges*. New York.

³⁴ E/2010/4–E/CN.6/2010/2

³⁵ UN General Resolution A/66/181, 25 July 2011: Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas, Report of the Secretary-General.

³⁶ International Labour Organization, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC). (2009, June). ILO – Give Girls a Chance ILO: *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling child labour, a key to the future*. Geneva. Author. www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=10290 (p.41).

³⁷ A/64/190 and report of the workshop on Gaps, trends and current research in gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty, Rome, FAO, IFAD, ILO, 31 March-2 April 2009.

³⁸ Temin, M. & Levine, R. (2009). *Start with a Girl: A New Agenda for Global Health: A Girls Count Report on Adolescent Girls*. www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/start_with_a_girl (. 15).

³⁹ (a) Cendrangolo, 2009; (b) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author. <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>; (c) UNICEF (2011). *The state of the world's children: Adolescence, an age of opportunity*. New York, Author. <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/fullreport.php>

⁴⁰ (a) ILO-IPEC. (2006). *The end of child labour: Within reach*, Geneva: International Labour Office, p. xi; (b) Rafferty, Y. (2007). Children for sale: Child trafficking in Southeast Asia. *Child Abuse Review*, 16, 401-422; (c) International Organization for Migration [IOM]. (2009). *Caring for trafficked persons: Guidance for health providers*. Geneva, Switzerland. Author.; (d) ILO-IPEC. (2009, June). ILO: *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling child labour, a key to the future*. Geneva.

⁴¹ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

2. SUPPORT ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT VIA EQUAL ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Fulfillment of human rights is a precondition for girls to successfully transition to adulthood and to become empowered economically and socially. Barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights persist in practice (e.g., gender stereotypes, patriarchal attitudes and discriminatory practices within families, communities and institutions) and in law (e.g., land, property, inheritance rights) and must be removed with urgency. Intensive legislative and administrative reforms must promote the economic empowerment of girls through the adoption of policies, strategies and programs that ensure equal access to education at all levels, physical and mental health care and services, employment opportunities; and economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies. Positive options and employment opportunities for girls in rural areas must be expanded.

3. INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The feminization of poverty requires investing sufficient resources for gender equality and the empowerment of girls, taking into account the diversity of needs between those in urban and rural areas. Promoting gender equality and empowerment within rural communities helps to reduce poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and violence. There must be greater investment in rural development and agriculture, labour-saving technology, and clean and renewable energy in rural communities.

4. INVEST IN QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Enhanced investment in quality education and training in rural areas, including vocational and literacy training, is a central intervention with strong multiplier effects. Comprehensive national education strategies must be developed that include long-term funding that ensures adequate education infrastructure and prioritizes girls' education in all development plans and poverty reduction plans.

5. IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS.

The development of effective policies and programmes for girls' empowerment and rural development will require strengthening countries' capacity to collect and analyse data that are disaggregated by sex and age, as well as by rural and urban population. Better use of existing data, such as available time-use surveys, should be made by policy makers. Gender markers and indicators should be used to measure the impact of policies on girls in rural areas. Additionally, examples of good practices and lessons learned in promoting gender equality and girls' empowerment in rural areas should be compiled and shared, with a view to replicating and scaling up successes.

6. LAUNCH PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS TO CREATE AWARENESS

Public campaigns are vital to eliminate discrimination in the public and private spheres based on the notion of girls' inferiority and support positive attitudes and behaviors that encourage girls' full partnership in all areas of life. Such campaigns must utilize the media and address the active role of men and boys by establishing gender equality and emphasizing the societal benefits for all of girls' empowerment. Studies also indicate that gender biases and stereotypes are influenced by parents, school, the media, and reinforced by the peer group. The mass media, for example

contributes to perpetuating negative gender stereotypes. Television programs, advertisements, and toys send the message that science and technology are for boys.

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