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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”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by International Council of 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

The International Council of Women, an organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, has, throughout its long history, been outspoken about all forms of discrimination and violence levelled against women and girls. The International Council of Women, in consultation with its affiliated organizations, is constantly looking at “best practice” methods of prevention.

The establishment of gender equality in all walks of life is paramount to the ending of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Any form of violence against women and girls is a gross violation of their human rights. It is degrading and lowers self-esteem. It occurs across the world in all social structures whether, for example, women are of indigenous descent or have a disability, are young girls or elderly women, are wealthy or poor. Perpetrators, too, come from varied backgrounds.

Violence against women and girls is preventable. To this end, in partnership with its affiliated organizations and other like-minded organizations, the International Council of Women works to empower women and girls and teach them about their rights. To recognize signs that a woman or girl is at risk of violence and put in place strategies to negate that risk is a best practice principle supported by the Council.

Of extreme concern are the inhuman practices that girls and young women suffer. The four major concerns of our organization are: female genital mutilation, honour killings, early forced marriage and female infanticide. Despite educational programmes and legislation, progress is slow in overcoming such practices. With the increased flow to developed nations of migrants and displaced persons from nations where such violations of human rights are practised, they are becoming a worldwide issue. Organizations affiliated to the International Council of Women in developed nations are working in partnership with other civil society organizations, their respective Governments and the communities affected to end these inhumane practices, which are increasingly being practised in their countries.

Accurate global data on the incidence of violence against women and girls, its causes and the effectiveness of preventative programmes is essential.

The International Council of Women, through its affiliated organizations and permanent representatives to the United Nations, advocates for the adequate protection of women and girls escaping violence. Governments are urged to provide appropriate emergency shelter and support, such as help lines via telephone or Internet, and also to provide preventative programmes. Self-help/peer groups do much to support women. They are also proven to be beneficial for men to overcome aggression.

In working to overcome violence, the International Council of Women recognizes gender and discrimination as the root causes of violence. The Council has policies supporting the ending of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; at its General Assembly of September 2012, a resolution was passed unanimously calling for the protection of women and children from rape in disaster, post-disaster, conflict and post-conflict situations. Using these policies, affiliated organizations are encouraged to urge their Governments to respect and so act upon the various United Nations human rights conventions and action plans that

call for ending discrimination and violence against women and girls, as well as the Security Council resolutions dealing with conflict and post-conflict issues. The affiliated organizations are encouraged to work with other civil society organizations, in partnership with Governments, to ensure that the recommendations are not only implemented into law but are effectively acted upon.

Education is an important and powerful tool. It empowers women and teaches them their rights as well as self-esteem. The International Council of Women also advocates for education to include mutual respect and cooperation between women and men; an essential for the formation of partnerships of trust.

The International Council of Women, in promoting gender equality, supports the equal sharing of responsibilities in caring for those unable to care for themselves such as those in the later stages of AIDS. It should not be left to women and girls to be the primary carer. The woman herself may well be suffering from HIV/AIDS contracted as a result of sexual violence.

The right of all women and girls to be respected and live in dignity, free from the fear of discrimination and violence, is a human right.
