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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 Center for Africa Development and Progress, 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

Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls

Center for Africa Development and Progress is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free Africa that ensures opportunity for Africans. It offers policy proposals and innovative ideas for the sole purpose of developing the leadership and personality qualities required to launch the continent on the pathway to genuine economic, social, political and spiritual progress in a democracy. Center for Africa Development and Progress, among some organizations, has started raising this kind of awareness in order to establish quality public education in Ghana, especially for the younger generation, on the essentials of progress and African civilization. We promote African entrepreneurship and business as a means of sustaining economic growth and development.

The priority theme for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls”, could not have been more appropriate, particularly so when women and girls still suffer inhumane treatment in the twenty-first century.

The reason for the use of coercive force is simply to establish and maintain power and control over a victim. This manifests itself in many forms, including physical/bodily harm, sexual activity elicited through the use of force, assault, the use of physical violence to instil fear, threats and intimidation and economic deprivation. The resultant effect is that victims are denied their fundamental human rights, while their psychological and emotional well-being is compromised and their development is seriously undermined.

Although violence against women and girls is a global phenomenon, it is quite common in poor and developing countries, where the struggle for survival takes precedence over human rights.

In Africa in particular, violence against the female gender is rooted deep in the social fabric of the people, their culture and traditions. As a result, the perpetrator is sometimes not even aware that he is abusing a fellow human being, since subconsciously he has been made to understand through his upbringing that he has more rights than women and girls.

In Ghana for instance, official records indicate that three out of five women suffer some form of violence, while one out of three women are reported to have experienced some form of assault from men. The victims of these barbaric acts are mostly related (by blood) to the perpetrators.

Center for Africa Development and Progress strongly believes that the number of women and girls reported to have suffered abuse is an underestimation because not all victims of abuse report their ordeal to the authorities.

Suffice it to state that in most African cultures, violence within the family is considered a private matter, therefore families often settle these issues privately, outside the law.

This notwithstanding, some women and girls have managed to bring their suffering into the limelight. This group of women and girls ought to be saluted for refusing to sweep their horrendous experiences under the carpet and making it possible for the rest of society to share in their stories.

We should encourage more women and girls to report all forms of abuse to make it possible for society to isolate those who disrespect, violate and discriminate against women.

We acknowledge the level of progress being made globally as far as advocacy against violence is concerned. However, we believe that Governments need to do more to root out this social canker.

Recommendations

To end all forms of violence against women and girls and improve their welfare, we urge Member States to:

- **Rigorously fight discrimination against women and girls by promoting gender equality.** Member States must be encouraged to implement existing United Nations conventions for the promotion of human rights, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, among others, calls for the humane treatment of refugee women and children.
- **Intensify public education.** Conscious efforts must be made towards forming and changing the attitudes of men and boys with a view to preventing violence in the first place. Member States should use the power of the media to promote healthy relationship between the opposite genders. We must also inculcate in school pupils a higher sense of discipline and positive attitudes that frown on violent behaviours. Opportunities should also be provided in the school curricula for the development of skills and values for positive relationships.
- **Promote wealth creation programmes to help reduce poverty among women, as well as dependency.** Women in developing countries lack the economic power and, therefore, are dependent on men for sustenance and survival. We urge Member States to take deliberate steps to develop programmes towards the economic emancipation of women.
- **Enforce stringent laws to deal with perpetrators.** We encourage Governments to institute laws that will punish perpetrators to discourage future would-be perpetrators while at the time adequately compensate victims. It is not just enough to promulgate laws; rather, Member States should pay particular attention to the enforcement of the laws.
- **Introduce a reward system to encourage men not be violent.** While we call upon Governments to deal with human rights violators, it is necessary that persons (in third world countries with a violent history) who promote the rights of women and girls get recognized to serve as a motivating factor for others to want to emulate.
- **Tackle the menace of religious fanatics.** Governments should take bold steps to deal ruthlessly with individuals and organizations that violate the human rights of women and girls in the name of religion. Such individuals/organizations and their sponsors should be named and shamed and even blacklisted.