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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 National Council of Women of the United States, 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 National Council of Women of the United States, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, has been at the forefront of championing equal rights for women and addressing the social and economic concerns of women since its inception in 1888.

Continuing in this tradition, the National Council strongly believes that gender equality is one of the overriding issues of the day that must be solved if the world is to move forward in the twenty-first century. Of primary importance to the National Council and its affiliates is the continuing violence and discrimination perpetrated upon women and girls worldwide.

Violence, in all its forms, affects the lives of millions of women and girls in all socioeconomic, cultural, religious and educational classes worldwide. As well as being degrading and inhuman, violence also severely impedes women's progress in society and robs them of their fundamental rights as human beings.

In support of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1993 in its resolution 48/104, and resolution 54/134, by which the Assembly decided to designate 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the National Council condemns gender-based violence in all its forms in the strongest possible terms.

The National Council recognizes that violence against women has historically contributed to gender discrimination, domination and power inequality, poverty and restricted access to education and health. It has also limited women's participation in Governments, organizations and institutions in the societies in which they live.

To redress these issues, the National Council, with its affiliates, has established programmes and initiatives in the United States, Africa and elsewhere.

In 2011, a national and international awareness and prevention of domestic violence campaign was established in support of the Secretary-General's campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. In addition, in partnership with affiliates, the National Council has established programmes to educate women in threatening domestic situations in the United States and Ghana about their rights, a radio programme in Durban, South Africa, to educate the public about the issues surrounding domestic violence and an anger management educational programme for men in South Africa.

Furthermore, at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2011, the National Council organized a side event on the theme "Combat violence: a focus on domestic violence globally". The keynote speaker was Kathy E. Ryan, Assistant Chief of the New York City Police Department Domestic Violence Unit. She offered solutions based on successful initiatives of the Unit that could be implemented nationally and internationally.

With its affiliated partners, the National Council is working to establish best practices to end some of the most egregious atrocities against women: female genital mutilation, sex and slave trafficking and early forced marriage. It has also established a safe motherhood programme in Malawi, which is laying the groundwork to promote better conditions for childbirth and addressing the issue of

back-to-back pregnancies, neglect and abandonment and lack of prenatal and postnatal care for pregnant women and girls.

It is the experience of the National Council, and also a fundamental tenet of its philosophy, that education and the elimination of poverty are key to the empowerment of women. If women are educated and aware of their basic rights as human beings, they will be less likely to be dominated and discriminated against. To that end, the National Council and its affiliates have built more than 70 water wells in rural Ghana, resulting in increased school enrolment of girls. Prior to the installation of the wells, girls were forced to miss the first hours of the school day because the burden of fetching water fell on them alone.

The National Council believes that, as stated in article 3 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, women have the right to life, equality, liberty, equal protection under the law, freedom from discrimination, a high standard of physical and mental health, just conditions of work and not to be tortured, abused or subjected to degrading treatment and punishment.

At the current session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the National Council staunchly supports and advocates the continued work of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, States, foundations, corporations and interested individuals to address the issue of gender-based violence. We urge all concerned to work towards innovative, timely and workable solutions to ensure that violence against women and girls is relegated to the dustbin of history.
