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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 Vida y Familia de Guadalajara, 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

Vida y Familia de Guadalajara, a private Mexican welfare institution helping pregnant women to achieve their rightful dignity and social integration, welcomes 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.

Prevention of violence against women must be considered with regard to sexual culture. The objectification of women in entertainment and media, the commercialization of sex and the pornography industry have caused increased sexual violence against women and girls. In 2009, 59 per cent of the marginalized women who Vida y Familia de Guadalajara served were victims of violence. Those women were treated as objects to be consumed, rather than persons to be respected. Governments and civil society should take action to protect women and girls facing sexual violence as a result of a hypersexualized culture. Vida y Familia de Guadalajara is particularly concerned by the violence and sexuality found in entertainment for children.

To respond to these trends, particular attention should be given to the needs of adolescents so as to enable them to deal positively and responsibly with their sexuality, including through voluntary sexual abstinence. Local, state and national governments should work together to bring those who commit violence against women and girls to justice. Violent domestic abusers, sex traffickers, rapists and perpetrators of sexual abuse against girls should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

The effects of sexual violence cannot be ameliorated by increased access to abortion. In accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Governments should take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning. Victims of rape who turn to abortion report higher rates of depression, substance abuse, broken and abusive relationships and suicide attempts after their abortions. Abortion allows others to ignore the woman's need for understanding and honest exploration and resolution of her trauma. The organization's 27 years of experience in the field of maternal health verify the conclusion expressed in the Dublin Declaration on Maternal Health, adopted at the International Symposium on Maternal Health, held in Dublin on 8 September 2012, that direct abortion is not medically necessary to save the life of a woman.

Vida y Familia de Guadalajara considers abortion to be an act of violence, especially against preborn girls. Sex-selective abortion through a combination of ultrasound and abortion has claimed more than 160 million potential women and girls in Asia alone. The United Nations Development Programme acknowledges that this discrepancy stems from a lifetime of gender discrimination, starting from the deliberate abortion of female foetuses. Women and girls should not be exposed to violence and discrimination, either before or after birth. The Commission on the Status of Women should join the call for strict action against sex-selective abortions.

Women facing and recovering from violence, especially those in circumstances of social and economic distress, must be treated with the dignity due to every human person. Civil society should provide special support structures for pregnant women in situations of distress and social vulnerability so that they can access legal

channels to give their children to loving adoptive families, thus preventing unexpected children from being abandoned or becoming victims of abuse, exploitation and marginalization. Through adoption, these children can be integrated into stable families who will provide and care for them. From 1985 to today, Vida y Familia de Guadalajara has cared for more than 18,000 women and their children, of whom 80 per cent have lived in shelters and 20 per cent have been supported externally. Afterwards, women are reintegrated as productive members of society. We encourage other non-governmental organizations to consider the efficient model of cooperation with Government agencies that Vida y Familia de Guadalajara uses to support pregnant women in distress.

Vida y Familia de Guadalajara recognizes the importance of educating women and girls in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Desiring to encourage youth to continue education in order to equip them for a better life and increase their human potential, we reaffirm the call of the International Conference on Population and Development for educational programmes in favour of life planning skills, healthy lifestyles and the active discouragement of substance abuse so that society can meet the needs and aspirations of youth.

Vida y Familia de Guadalajara affirms that the family is the most basic, fundamental unit of human society. Families are the primary source of protection from victimization for women and girls. When family ties break down, young women are increasingly exposed to risks, such as dropping out of school, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, premature pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Marriages where the husband and the wife are equal partners create the stable environment necessary to provide adequate health and education for youth. Governments and civil society should take steps to provide families with comprehensive protection and support.
