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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 Alliance Defense Fund, 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 Alliance is a not-for-profit international legal alliance of more than 1,700 lawyers dedicated to the protection of fundamental human rights. It has argued cases before the Supreme Court of the United States and the European Court of Human Rights. It has also provided expert testimony to the European Parliament and the United States Congress. It has full accreditation with the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union (the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Parliament).

The Alliance condemns any form of violence against women. Violence against women is a problem that not only affects women but also affects families and society as a whole.

Violence is the illegitimate use of force to kill, maim, grievously injure or otherwise harm another person. No person, regardless of his or her stage in life, can legitimately be subject to any type of violence.

One type of violence of which little is spoken, but which infringes directly on women's right to life, is sex-selective abortion (and its close kin, female infanticide).

According to the United Nations Population Fund, the census carried out in India in 2011 revealed that there were about 7.1 million fewer girls than boys aged up to 6 years, a situation that is due to increased prenatal sex determination with subsequent selective abortion of female fetuses. The number of "missing women" is high. Researchers estimated that 100 million women were missing in Asia by 1990 owing to deliberate elimination before or after birth.

There is a similar situation in China, where the sex ratio at birth has been growing at an alarming rate over the last three decades. The ratio of boys per 100 girls jumped between 1982 and 2005 from 107 to 120. At the regional level, the disparity is even sharper, with the ratio in some provinces higher than 130.

Without a secure right to life, all other rights are illusory. Sex-selective abortion thus results in the undermining of all women's rights, constituting the most extreme form of discrimination against women.

Millions of women are subject to death before birth simply because they are women, affecting not only the right to life and the right to a life free of violence, but also the right to equality between men and women.

Sex selection also leads to a gender imbalance, which is more pronounced in certain countries, such as India and China. The consequences of sex-selective abortion go beyond demographic statistics. There are indications that it could have longer-term social implications, especially in the form of marriage squeeze, leading to increased migration, including bride trafficking and abduction, increased polyandry and more forced marriages in the short term. This will mean that men will compete for access to women instead of viewing them as fellow citizens equal in dignity.

Sex-selective abortion thus leads to greater abuse of the women who were fortunate enough to have been born rather than aborted. As noted in paragraph 18 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, gender-based violence and all

forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated.

To work in favour of eliminating sex-selective abortion is to work for non-discrimination and the equal dignity of women. It is to create awareness in society that men and women are equal and have the same rights, including the right to life.

In order to solve the problem of violence, it will not be enough to promote women's rights or simply to call for increased legislation. To eradicate violence against women, we have to work to educate society to realize that all people have equal dignity, regardless of sex.
