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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 Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer, 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

Millennium Development Goal 5, one of the most important for the well-being of women, is the furthest from being achieved. In the years since the Goals were adopted, the improvement of maternal health and the reduction of maternal mortality have not been prioritized in many countries of the world, including those of Latin America and the Caribbean. Goal 5 is very closely related to Goal 3, to promote gender equality and empower women, and Goal 1, to eradicate poverty, which particularly affects women and youth.

Argentina will not succeed in meeting its commitment to reducing maternal mortality. Maternal deaths have remained at the same level for many years. Nor has it cut by 10 per cent the inequalities in maternal deaths among the provinces. This rate of maternal mortality is unacceptable in terms of the country's health and social indicators.

The death of women in connection with pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period is a public health problem and a human rights violation, which in most cases could be prevented through specific steps and sustainable policies. In Argentina, complications resulting from unsafe abortions have been the main cause of maternal deaths for the past two decades, particularly among poor women.

We are concerned about the institutional obstacles that persist in Argentina in terms of providing care during the types of abortion that have been legal since 1921 and ensuring the full implementation of sexual health programmes and responsible procreation.

Sexual and reproductive rights are not guaranteed equally throughout Argentine territory. As a society, we have made some progress in passing laws in support of sexual and reproductive rights, but gaps exist when it comes to enforcing these laws and making an impact on health.

Currently, in 15.6 per cent of births in Argentina, the mothers are adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age. This figure is on the rise, especially in poor sectors, among teenage dropouts and in girls under 15, as recorded in the northern provinces of the country.

Given that 69 per cent of these teenage pregnancies are unplanned, we consider it essential to enforce the laws and design public policies to empower adolescent girls and boys by providing them with information to enable them to decide whether or not to become pregnant or to carry a pregnancy to term.

The main causes of teenage pregnancy are the failure to implement the Comprehensive Sexual Education Act, adopted in 2006; the rejection of sexual and reproductive health services to care for and provide contraceptives to teenagers; and sexual abuse and rape, primarily victimizing children under 15.

According to surveys by the Foundation for Studies and Research on Women, 65 per cent of pregnant adolescents do not use any contraceptive method in their sexual relations; there is, moreover, an alarming resistance among teenagers to using condoms, the only contraceptive method that can prevent sexually transmitted infections. The main concern among adolescents with regard to sexual relations is pregnancy, not sexually transmitted infections.

Another significant aspect is the rise in violence against women and girls in Argentina, especially in its most extreme form, femicide, where the gender inequalities that should be addressed under Goal 3 find their most cruel expression. Although Argentina has made progress in passing laws to prevent and penalize all forms of violence against women and girls (Act No. 26,485) and increasing the penalties for femicide (Act No. 26.791), these have yet to be fully implemented. Every day and a half, a woman is murdered in Argentina just for being a woman, and many others are beaten, threatened and victimized by discrimination. These laws must be fully enforced and complied with, ensuring women's access to justice, ending impunity and tolerance with regard to gender-based violence; moreover, campaigns and training sessions are needed in order to deter this type of violence.

We therefore call for concrete measures and for the inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda of the following:

- Guarantee comprehensive sexual education at all levels of schooling, since it not only provides information to adolescent girls and boys to help them decide how to behave sexually while promoting safe practices and gender equity, but also is necessary to prevent sexual violence and abuse and to teach adolescents how to act in such situations;
- Guarantee and promote education among adolescent girls and boys, since higher levels of education have a positive correlation with lower rates of teenage pregnancy;
- Encourage adolescents who are pregnant or are mothers and fathers to continue and complete their schooling, since 6 out of 10 adolescents who are in school at the time of pregnancy drop out;
- Create a health system with adolescent-friendly services to provide teenagers, in private, with information and free, effective, safe contraceptives;
- Recognize and guarantee comprehensive sexual and reproductive rights;
- Guarantee the non-punishment of abortion in cases of sexual abuse and promote the legalization of such abortion, thereby helping to reduce clandestine abortions, the main cause of maternal mortality;
- Implement systems for the registration of gender-based violence to guide public policies and the implementation of a national plan to fight gender-based violence;
- Continue improving women's access to justice, expanding intervention models to ensure such access, including training for all personnel;
- Design a prevention system, which involves systematic awareness campaigns and the care of victims, including medical, psychological, legal and economic assistance;
- Reduce labour insecurity and improve women's economic situation to as to limit the feminization of poverty.