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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 Institute for Practical Idealism, 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

Valuing diversity as an element for achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Valuing diversity is a foundation for respecting each human life, which is one prerequisite for advancing towards the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. A complementary focus on diversity in education and training programmes, along with providing resources for acquiring skills and ensuring access for women, creates solidarity among women and develops powerful new networks and approaches.

Legacy International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in the United States of America recently ran a three-year programme on women's leadership to build capacity among women in Ukraine. With the aim of enhancing communication between regions and forging a stronger identity among women NGO leaders at the national level, it brought together women from eastern, southern and northern parts of the country who would otherwise never have met or worked together. They examined problems of families and youth from a national perspective, bridged their linguistic, political and cultural differences and initiated ways of sharing resources and knowledge that advanced both their individual work and the non-governmental sector as a whole.

A second element of the programme was to seek women participants from different sectors: small and large government and non-governmental institutions and private businesses. Bridging the acknowledged divide between the non-governmental organization, business and government sectors and between small and large institutions gave added benefits. With careful training inputs, participants began to understand and respect the diverse roles that each plays in society and the need for collaboration. For example, women leaders at a newspaper, a Government-run orphanage and a small non-governmental organization in a city in Ukraine united around the issue of abandoned babies and the prejudice concerning adoption. In the course of less than a year, they raised public awareness, increasing adoptions from the orphanage by 600 per cent. In three villages where pregnancy prevention programmes were run, teen pregnancies decreased by 63 per cent and unwanted births among teens by 57 per cent.

Women from different regions were part of the NGO's Kyrgyz Women's leadership and capacity-building programme in Central Asia. The programme was able to overcome linguistic differences (Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz) by clarifying concepts in different languages and seeking national unity by delivering the training in a neutral location outside of the region. In two years, more than 19,000 people were served directly through important projects created and implemented by women participants who were mentored to design their own projects and who received small grants from the NGO. As a result of the programme, at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border (an area of high conflict potential), one alumna trained 16 new leaders and forged relationships among eight villages to convene a day of peace during the Nowruz holiday. Two other alumni held workshops with religious and civil leaders to fight extremism building in the South.

In cooperation with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education and Science, the NGO and its partner, the International Center Interbilim, are planning to launch a peacebuilding programme in 31 schools, training 40 teachers who will then train 800 youths in 2014. These teachers (the majority of whom are women) will train in ethnic pairs in multi-ethnic classrooms, thus playing a major role in pre-emptive peacebuilding in southern Kyrgyzstan.
