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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development
and peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Association of Families and Women in Rural Areas, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Women are a fundamental element for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In the wake of the Millennium Development Goals we are now, in 2015, facing a new, broader and more ambitious challenge: the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And once again, it must be remembered that achieving those 17 new goals will depend to a large extent on women.

Women are a fundamental factor in the sustainable development of peoples. It is for the most part women who manage, conserve, exploit and use natural resources. They are the real force for food security: they produce 70% of the world's food supply, although they own only 2% of the land and 38% of them have no income of their own. It is women who trudge mile after mile every day to fetch water and to gather firewood to heat their homes. It is women who strive to reduce risks and lead the response to natural disasters.

But this role is still not sufficiently appreciated, and women have yet to achieve the empowerment that would allow them to play a more effective and recognized part in the planet's economic and sustainable development.

Efforts to advance women's empowerment, then, must be a worldwide priority in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

States all over the world need to implement policies to promote the empowerment of women.

At the present time, a country's gross domestic product does not reflect the complexity of production systems, nor the environmental contribution or the unpaid work that women perform.

It is also essential to address the specific problems that affect women directly, and to promote their integration into the workforce, as well as their access to land ownership, so that women can achieve greater economic autonomy and take a bigger part in decisions that affect their lives.

Women are key players in development, and consequently all decisions relating to development policies must take account of women as the drivers and protagonists of development when it comes to designing urban plans and the delivery of basic services such as electricity, water and transportation, and designing agricultural and livestock policies.

It is important to facilitate women's access to credit, to encourage their education and training, to make the new technologies accessible to women, and to promote their rights to property and patents.

In light of the above, we in the Association of Families and Women in Rural Areas (Spain) believe that the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must give unequivocal priority to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as the only way to ensure that, when we come to assessing the fulfilment of the Agenda's 17 goals 15 years from now, we will find that we have in fact achieved the target. Without women it will surely be impossible to reach that target.