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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 SOS Éducation, 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 have an essential role in sustainable development. Efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals would be futile if they failed to take into account rural girls and women and their rights. For these efforts to be successful, they must be based on two fundamental elements: gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in rural areas.

To achieve true gender equality, the following are required:

- Equal pay for equal work for men and women.
- Equality in employment and responsibilities.
- Women in the same political positions as men.
- Women in senior positions in public and private administrations.
- The same education for girls in rural areas as for their peers in the city. Regardless of their background, girls must attend school.
- The same rights in the household for women and men.

Empowerment is another important factor in the emancipation of women, especially in rural areas. Accordingly, the recommendations should include the following:

- Teach women and girls in rural areas to read and write.
- Train women in income-generating activities.
- Organize women in cooperatives to receive training and funding for their activities or projects.
- Prohibit early or forced marriages.
- Provide rural women and girls with social services such as schools, hospitals and roads, and an agricultural policy that allows them to produce enough food to feed themselves.

Thank you.
