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Statement submitted by Center of Civil Initiatives Support, 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

Increasing the potential of women in rural areas to organize and conduct business in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan took the responsibility to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) until 2030, where gender equality issues have become a cross-cutting component of almost all national sustainable development goals of Uzbekistan. As a result, within the framework of the Strategy of Action for the five priority development directions of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021, one of the most important areas of social reforms is to increase the education level and economic activity of women, to make them involved in entrepreneurial activities and to strengthen the role of women along with the foundation of the family in government and society.

In the decision of economic and social tasks on maintenance of gender equality and increase of a standard of living of rural women the efforts of the state, non-governmental organizations and the world community are mobilized. The leading role in this is played by the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, local authorities (khokimiyats), self-governing bodies of citizens (mahallas), public foundations, women's non-governmental organizations and international organizations.

The Center of Civil Initiatives Support, being a women's non-governmental non-profit organization, carries out its activities to promote issues of equal women's rights, economic empowerment of women, and increase the gender sensitivity of society.

Completed projects of the Center were aimed at providing high-quality professional services for legal and psychological assistance to vulnerable groups of women and expanding their economic opportunities (2009–2014 in the framework of three projects funded by the European Commission under the TACIC/IBPP program); conducting gender expertise of the current legislation (the Labor and Family Codes of the Republic of Uzbekistan); preparation and publication of statistical gender-disaggregated collections "Women and Men of Uzbekistan", etc.

The staff of the Center participated in the UN Women and Women's Committee of Uzbekistan project on the economic empowerment of women in rural areas where, in the first and second phases of the project, in total in the six pilot regions of Uzbekistan, more than 500 women from rural areas were united into 85 self-help groups (GWP), and were obtain the skills of microcrediting and running business. 80 per cent of these trained women developed business plans and prepared documents for obtaining the status of a small business entity and were funded by the Microcreditbank.

Taking into account the success of the implementation of the 2 stages of the project, the UN Women Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia decided to continue the project in the Muinak region of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. This is one of the regions affected by the ecological disaster of the Aral Sea. The staff of the Center conducted a study on assessing the entrepreneurial potential of women from low-income families and the ability to produce goods and services in accordance with demand in local markets in Muinak region.

According to the results of sociological survey and the analysis results, it is concluded that rural women from low-income families have the potential, desire and opportunities to launch the business of producing goods and services to fulfil the demand of the local consumer market. A great help in organizing business is provided

by the Women's Committee, the Business Women's Association, various specialized NGOs and microcredit organizations. As a result of such projects, it was revealed that the social model of the behaviour of women from the socially vulnerable segments of the population is gradually changing. Women are becoming more active not only in business, but also in decision-making. Their thinking is transformed from a marginal to a desire to live better. At the same time, problems that limit the development of women's business in rural areas have been identified, and proposals to overcome these issues have been developed and included in the Development Strategy of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.
