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Statement submitted by Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale, 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

Contribution by the Organisation Mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale on the advancement and empowerment of rural women, the source of a new humanity

Women, who make up half of humankind, have always played an essential role in the continuity, transmission and development of life. Woman is the indispensable foundation of all human activities, which themselves arise from mother Earth, the wellspring of all the planet's living organisms. Woman hosts and transmits life. Thus, she lives that function, takes on that role, and prepares herself for that mission, the most important one. That is something society needs to recognize and value.

Rural women, whose daily life is inseparable from that function and that mission, are still closer to, more grounded in, nature. They have a deeper, unconscious understanding of their link of interdependence with the sources of life and daily take part in sustainable development through their activities, cherishing the living world in the form of children, human beings and nature, and through their economic contribution. They are the key actors in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals under a new paradigm, for it is their nature to foster the life, health and happiness of future human beings: the children who will make up the society of today and tomorrow. That preparation is carried out in the mother's womb, the source of all future economic and sociocultural actors, politicians and educators, who will work to build a world of fraternity, prosperity and peace.

Schooling and education

Hence, it is important to recognize that schooling must be complemented by education in the universal values of life in all its dimensions, physical, natural, mental and psychological, and its social and spiritual influences. Such education is fundamental in laying the groundwork for a new paradigm, one rooted in the inmost core of each human being. That new paradigm, which was set out in the preamble to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in New York in September 2015, requires a change in individual and collective mentalities and behaviours to create a human society where prosperity, well-being and peace will prevail. The difference between schooling and education was well expressed by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, in his message for the International Day of Rural Women, 15 September 2014, which reads in part: "My mother has lived her whole life in the countryside. Although she did not receive much of a formal education, I grew up appreciating her wisdom, resilience and intelligence. In the course of my subsequent public service, I came to see that these qualities are shared by millions of rural women around the world.

"Collectively, rural women are a force that can drive global progress. We must harness that power to achieve our three interlinked objectives for [2015], accelerating our work towards the Millennium Development Goals."

Through public education, university teaching and social learning, we can also educate young people and give them the scientific knowledge they need to leverage their immense creative power. Thus, young rural women will be able to fulfil their role of bringing to birth the society of tomorrow. It follows that there is a need for comprehensive social information that may be conducive to conscious parenthood.

An educational approach and benevolent, enlightened and constructive communication are important levers for recognizing and rewarding rural women for their real power to live fully independent lives in solidarity and sharing. It is also very important to identify the inner hindrances (memories of fear, of guilt, of anger or of violence) and extrinsic constraints, both structural and sociocultural (taboos, outdated traditions, community coercion, etc.), that impede the expression of women's constructive power.

Recognition of women's contribution to the informal economy (unrecognized, unpaid volunteer work) through their economic and social empowerment is indispensable for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Development and inner liberation, with justice and equality, may be achieved through education and benevolent communication. Sociocultural structures must be adapted to allow the expression of women's creative and constructive potential, which may be manifested in:

- The environment, the natural world, which bears and nurtures us as a mother does her child. Our mother Earth, quickened by heat and sunlight, is the source of all life and all food resources.
- The sociocultural universe, made up of human communities imbued with cultural and spiritual traditions to which most human beings still subscribe.

Education, relationships and communication are important levers for sustaining and improving the quality of life and the freedom of all members of the human community as well as their mutual relations. The wealth of a community, its ability to live in peace and abundance, depends on the quality of such communication, with shared information and knowledge. Obviously, respect and appreciation for the living world are beneficial in sustainable development. A positive education, based on up-to-date knowledge of human beings' physical and psychological makeup, is fundamental for such harmonious development. It has been proven that an empathic relationship promotes good communication, learning, and the development of human faculties and qualities.

Women's transmission of life and cherishing of children

Mother and child are so united during this first stage of life that their powerful bond imparts to her children a physical, psychological and spiritual life force whose effects will last them their whole life. Future parents, and mothers in particular, have a responsibility to give their child a healthy life and wholesome food, but above all their unconditional love and tenderness, with elevated thoughts and feelings throughout their daily round. A safe environment helps to structure the body and the soul: physically (through the mother's blood), hormonally (through her beneficial hormones), but also genetically, since cellular memory and genetic programming hold a record of our sensations, mentality, and thoughts and feelings.

New communications technologies, mediated by the Internet and mobile phones, are powerful tools for the empowerment of rural women, their training and their development in solidarity. Educational applications can be of considerable help in their individual, family and community advancement, providing keys to their liberation. They also facilitate sharing and exchanges, spurring regional economic development and prosperity.

An approach employing benevolent, enlightened, and constructive or creative communication can also powerfully mobilize human beings' enormous positive

potential. Its large-scale application on behalf of rural women will have the following benefits:

- Official recognition of their essential contribution to human life—their transmission of life itself, their educational efforts within the family or the community, their informal economic activities (voluntary or unpaid) and their agricultural work, providing food (to avert malnutrition and famine).
- Appreciation of all the real benefits they provide to the community.
- Support for women to help them continue their efforts toward the community's maintenance and harmonious development.
- Increasing empowerment of women, a source of emancipation, freedom, development, well-being and peace. This will facilitate access to education, to schooling, for all children but especially for girls.

There must be recognition and appreciation of feminine values, of women in the rural environment and of motherhood as the source of a new humanity. While a mother's function is to transmit life, even during her pregnancy she plays an educational role. She is a fundamental actor in the creation of a new societal paradigm emphasizing abundance, well-being and peace.

It is important to recognize that she holds the key to sustainable development and peace in the world. She is a natural teacher of peace, acting to bring forth a happier world.

Rural women's contribution to greater human well-being must be recognized so that they enjoy the respect they deserve for all their beneficent acts on behalf of the living world, economic prosperity and peace.

Every day they help to make the world more welcoming through their selfless, altruistic love and their embodiment of beauty in their environment.
