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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; priority theme: “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”

Statement submitted by Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer, 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.

* E/CN.6/2012/1.

Statement

In addressing the priority theme for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges, Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer requests that, as a first step, the Commission seek the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by States Members and agencies of the United Nations, especially by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with regard to the inclusion of the contribution of the unpaid work of women in food production, care and related unpaid work and the education of children in satellite gross domestic product accounts and other relevant statistics (strategic objective H.3 of the Platform for Action). Given the current challenges to many Member State economies, it is unlikely that local governments, regional bodies or national Governments, which did not manage to provide services to rural areas when the budgetary situation could more easily have borne such costs, will now introduce such services without a significant change to the statistics supporting economic policy analysis and development, which would make women's contribution of unpaid work to the economy and society visible.

The organization requests, as a second step, that two key policy positions of United Nations agencies be endorsed by the Commission to underpin the implementation of women's economic empowerment: the International Labour Organization (ILO) "social protection floor" and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tripartite approach to unpaid care work: recognition, reduction and redistribution.

The concept of a "social protection floor" is about ensuring that it is impossible to fall below a certain standard of living. Because much of the work women do is unpaid and unrecognized, it is unfortunately no surprise that so many women, as well as those children, elderly and disabled persons who are dependent on them, are still therefore exposed to poverty all over the world. The invisibility of their work contributes greatly to the lack of focus on their economic situation. The existence of a "social protection floor" would act to protect them from the worst outcomes associated with exposure to poverty and would ensure a minimum decent standard of living for all, including for those living in rural communities.

The UNDP approach would directly address both certain aspects of poverty and the many holes in existing social welfare safety nets. This approach has the potential to empower women in rural areas and improve their ability to combat poverty both in their families and in their communities. It could also improve the financial position of rural communities and facilitate the provision of both paid and unpaid services within families and communities without resulting in women reducing their participation and income over their lifetimes, especially as they age, as well as encourage men's participation in care and related unpaid work. Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer contends that adopting the ILO concept of a "social protection floor" and the UNDP approach to unpaid care work would therefore also have a positive impact on rural women's lives and communities, as well as financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the review theme for this session of the Commission on the Status of Women.