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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**

Statement submitted by United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, 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.



Statement

The United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries is a global mission agency with 11 million members, 800,000 of whom are directly involved in justice for women through its women's division, United Methodist Women. This division supports programmes related to women, children and youth in more than 100 countries, and its work with grass-roots women leaders and women's organizations in the United States of America and throughout the world provides a first-hand understanding of current realities and needs with regard to violence against women. United Methodist Women urgently calls for the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. Violence against women hurts everyone, not just women.

While the Beijing Platform for Action notes that violence against women and girls occurs in both public and private spheres, it recognizes that States have the responsibility to ensure the safety of women and girls from violence through legislation, enforcement, education and training, whether the acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons. States are called upon to comply with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which provides that States should develop preventive approaches and "all those measures of a legal, political, administrative and cultural nature that promote the protection of women against any form of violence", and they are urged to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As the Commission on the Status of Women meets to discuss how to end violence against women and girls, the focus should be on the responsibility of State actors to end such violence.

The world must react with alarm when a 14-year-old Pakistani girl is shot for seeking to attend school and when hundreds of women are raped in the Congo. Physical violence must be condemned. At the same time, social, economic and political structures institutionalize and legitimize violence that often goes unobserved and unpunished. Structural violence includes:

- Economic systems that condemn millions to poverty, including extreme poverty, particularly marginalized racial and ethnic communities
- Structural racism that systematically denies access to education, housing, jobs and resources for whole populations
- Criminalization and mass incarceration, used as tools that disproportionately target marginalized racial and ethnic communities and migrants
- Cultural practices that continue to give men power over women and girls, including the interpretation of religious traditions in ways that control and degrade women
- Energy, industrial and agricultural practices that exacerbate climate change, leading to displacement and conditions conducive to physical violence against women and girls
- Concentration and privatization of food production, lack of control over world food prices, and lack of food sovereignty, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, impoverishment, "debt suicides" and physical violence

- Resource extraction and land-grabbing by transnational corporations and their State partners, leading to the displacement of marginalized communities, conflict and militarization
- Militarization and war, including the local police militarization of specific racial and ethnic communities, civil conflicts, resource wars, military intervention and occupation

While efforts to combat specific cases of physical violence and to address the needs of survivors are essential, such cases will not end until States and broader society work to dismantle these systems of structural violence. Changes in attitudes and societal norms are necessary but insufficient; we need change in the structures that create the conditions in which such violence occurs.

Global engagement by United Methodist Women

United Methodist Women is responding through education, service and advocacy for systemic change:

- A domestic violence initiative in the United States engages United Methodist women and men in educating peers and changing behaviours and supports the television documentary *I Believe You*
- Through the Women and Global Migration Working Group, we advocate policy that addresses causes of migration and the rights of female migrants. We challenge the denial of services and resources, including shelters and recourse to justice, to women of irregular status as well as the abuse of women in detention
- Our human trafficking initiative has trained leaders in the United States to take action in their communities, involving more than 2,000 women. Online resources help educate and mobilize members for local action and national policy advocacy
- We advocate at the global level and support women in conflict-affected countries as they seek to protect the rights of women and girls, increase women's participation in decision-making and strengthen the capacity of women to secure their rights in reconstruction processes through legal mechanisms such as Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)
- We advocate just debt, trade, economic and energy policies in the United States and throughout the world.

United Methodist Women calls for the following.

Structural peace

Education, awareness-raising and services for survivors of violence must be accompanied by States' engagement in prevention through systemic change. The narrow focus on projects and best practices must be coupled with State commitments to:

- Implement equitable and sustainable macroeconomic and trade policy
- Curb the role of transnational corporations in land-grabbing and resource extraction

- Practice sustainable production, consumption and energy policy
- Address economic inequality through job creation, training, taxation and social spending
- Affirm the human rights of all, regardless of status.

Intersectional policy approach

State economic and social policies must address the intersection of oppressions against women, including those relating to race, ethnicity, class, language, religion, sexual orientation and national status.

Generic policies that do not address the particular realities of women and girls who experience multiple oppressions exclude those women and girls. This includes, among others, indigenous women, women of the African diaspora, migrant women, lesbians, disabled women, rural women, widows, young and old women, and women belonging to religious minorities.

Real development

Gender must be both a stand-alone development goal and a cross-cutting theme in all development goals on the post-2015 agenda. “Development” is not about increased gross national product (GNP) at any cost, but about human development, which includes gender equality, women’s empowerment and respect for human dignity. The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that violence against women is an obstacle to development, peace and equality. To achieve development goals, States must actively work towards: ending violence against women and girls, peace, an end to militarism and the fulfilment of women’s economic, social and cultural rights.

Cultural peace

Many practices in the North and the South that violate women’s human rights are considered culturally acceptable. Rape, incest and domestic violence occur on a regular basis. In some communities, female infanticide or neglect of a female child is commonplace, or girls are forced into early marriage. Abuse by employers, police and prison officials is also common. Too often, both men and women are taught to see violence as an appropriate way to resolve disputes. States must:

- Affirm a culture of peace as an alternative to conflict, from the home and the community to the military
- Legislate, educate and enforce in order to end all traditional practices that perpetuate violence against women and to end such violence.

Economic peace

Women are often the poorest of the poor and are especially vulnerable to violence. When desperate to make ends meet and feed their families or flee from an abusive partner, they accept low wages and high risks. Some work at night and are vulnerable to violence in transit. Some turn to prostitution, often with violent consequences. Women migrating for jobs within and across borders may become more vulnerable to abuse and rape by their employers. Lured by jobs, many end up in servitude or as sex slaves. States must provide women and girls:

- Access to an equal and non-gender-biased education that leads to decent work
- Equal access to social services and resources
- Protection from abusive employers and legal recourse

Appropriate legislation and consistent enforcement

Many nations have failed to adopt or implement legislation to end violence against women. States must:

- Involve more women in decision-making processes
- Work actively to prevent and punish violence against women in both public and private spheres and strengthen judicial systems to hold perpetrators accountable
- Legally address violence against women as a human rights violation, understand the global nature of conflict within nations and share responsibility. Implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) goes beyond plans by nations in conflict. Developed country policies often fuel conflicts elsewhere. States must link investment and trade policy to women's human rights, monitoring the impact of policies on women and girls.

Response systems

When systemic violence and cultural bias lead to physical violence, women and girls often have little recourse to friends, family members, the police or the justice system. States and local government must:

- Support shelters and legal aid for survivors
- Train police and hospital workers who work with survivors
- Make resources available for education and assistance to women survivors of violence in all their diversity

United Methodist Women will continue to build global alliances and work with partners towards a world free from violence against women and girls.
