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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and 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 United Nations Association of the United States of America, 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

Even in 2017, gender equality remains a pervasive issue all over the world. While the world made progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment through the Millennium Development Goals, this fundamental human right has not yet been fully realized. Gender equality, one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is integral to achieving all 17, and is also crucial to ushering in a more peaceful and prosperous world.

As technology becomes more ubiquitous and integrated into our daily lives, it is imperative that women have equal access to media and information and communication technologies, so that they too can participate in, contribute to, and advance their societies. Technology has unleashed many tools that have empowered and improved the lives of many people; women should not be excluded from these benefits simply because they are women. When women are equipped with these digital tools of empowerment, the whole world will benefit.

The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), the largest grassroots network of UN advocates in the world, recognizes the power of technology and uses digital advocacy as a primary strategy to advance our mission of mobilizing Americans to support the goals of the UN. Sixty per cent of our membership is comprised of digitally savvy young people who have shown how to harness the power of technology to achieve social good.

One of UNA-USA's key initiatives is to mobilize female members who are dedicated to the cause of gender equality. Through online resources, we provide advocacy toolkits that enable our members to champion and promote this cause through their social networks and to their elected officials. This past year, UNA-USA encouraged our members to support U.S. funding for UNFPA and women's health programs. We armed them with an online toolkit that included issue and policy background information, talking points, sample tweets and Facebook posts, a sample letter for members of Congress, an op-ed template, and other resources. At our annual Leadership Summit, our members take their digital campaigns to Capitol Hill, where they persuaded our leaders to heed the gender equality agenda.

With the knowledge, tools, and resources gained from our programming, UNA-USA members hosted gender equality campaigns across the country, from human trafficking prevention forums in Kentucky, to fundraisers for Empower-Her feminine hygiene kits in Iowa, to panel discussions about gender issues in South Carolina. In addition, our members work with local governments across the country to recognize the principles of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) by way of local ordinances and resolutions.

The members of UNA-USA are devoted advocates for gender equality. Through our organization's emphasis on using technology as a tool for social change we recognize first-hand how technology empowers its users. We will continue to support our member's efforts to achieve the SDGs and we will inspire them to take action for equitable access to technology through those very means.
