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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality, 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

Twenty five years since the adoption of the most ambitious agenda for the empowerment of women and girls everywhere, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is yet to be implemented practically and concretely. Women and girls around the world continue to face systemic barriers holding them from equal participation in all areas of life. We at ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality strongly believe that building stable, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable societies requires the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, and therefore call upon member states to commit to addressing systemic imbalances and accelerate progress towards gender equality.

Much has been accomplished by countries in the Middle East and North Africa region in terms of awareness-raising, legislation and planning, and compliance with international agreements and conventions. However, progress has been slow and often hampered due to crises, armed conflicts and entrenched traditional social norms that lead to discrimination and prevent the full advancement of women in society. Considerable political, institutional, societal, economic and cultural challenges continue to hinder the accelerated realization of gender equality in the MENA region in alignment with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Major obstacles that countries in the Middle East and North African region continue to face include:

- The constant changing and transformative context along with the instability on political, security and economic levels which often affect women disproportionately
- Lack of transitional justice approaches that help deal with the legacy of the country's past
- The non-alignment of national legislation with international conventions such as The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Institutional fragmentation and downward accountability, along with lack of diligent planning, monitoring and transparency
- The scarcity of gender-based statistical data that allow accurate assessment of the gender gap and help with program planning and advocacy efforts
- Inadequate government funding which prevents the integration of gender issues in budgeting
- Lack of a gender equality perspective in education curricula
- The growing politicization of media that neglects social responsibility and continues to reinforce gender discrimination by objectifying women and by being tolerant towards the culture of gender-based violence
- Lack of awareness, capacity and resources of service providers and front-liners and other stakeholder to operationalize international commitments, standards and tools

We call upon United Nations Member States to urge countries of the Middle East and North Africa region to:

1. Invest in peacebuilding rather than war

2. Incorporate gender equality approaches in all transitional justice tracks, without overlooking crimes and violations that affect women and girls
 3. Lift reservations to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and to accede to its Optional Protocol
 4. Amend national legislation so that they are aligned with international human rights conventions and standards, and eliminate discrepancies among national laws to ensure coherence and consistency
 5. Adopt legislation and measures, and provide the necessary services to address the consequences and causes of violence, including sexual violence, faced by women in times of conflict, and recognizing this violence as a war crime, holding the perpetrators accountable and denying them impunity
 6. Strengthen the capacities of national women machineries
 7. Develop effective national action plans and mainstream gender equality and provide the necessary budgets for implementation of the strategies, laws and measures to guarantee women's access to justice
 8. Ensure people led and rights-based approaches in planning, implementing and evaluating the application of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
 9. Adopt a systemic approach to address social norms and drivers of gender discrimination through behavioral change campaigning and opinion building interventions.
 10. Develop standardized operations on national level to have unified modality of documentation and accurate national data that help in programming and advocating for legal reform
 11. Reform educational systems and curricula to include a gender-lens and support gender-positive learning from early education onwards
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