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### Commission on the Status of Women

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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda\*

**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: equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

#### **Statement submitted by Womankind Worldwide, 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 of 25 July 1996.

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\* E/CN.6/2006/1.

## Statement

WOMANKIND Worldwide<sup>1</sup> is an international women's human rights and development organisation working in partnership with 70 organisations around the world to tackle inequality and improve the status of women.

Our work and the experiences of our partners over the years have reaffirmed our belief that there can be no sustainable development or peace and security without a commitment to the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

Women's political participation since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which calls for a 30% target of women in decision-making positions globally, has seen only a minimal increase.<sup>2</sup> And in all regions, women are often still perceived as unequal to men in the home and in the workplace, leading to their exclusion or marginalisation in decision-making processes.

In countries where significant progress has been made, women's access to and participation in decision-making has been achieved largely through the adoption of affirmative action measures and proportional electoral systems. Women's lobbying, networking and mobilisation has also played a crucial role. Some examples of the work WOMANKIND supports demonstrates this:<sup>3</sup>

- In Albania, leadership training for existing and potential women candidates and initiatives to challenge negative stereotypes in the media has helped to increase the capacity, support for and numbers of women represented in policy, leadership and decision-making roles
- In Somalia, where public life is determined by five main clans dominated by men, and where women are traditionally excluded, women have been able to earn recognition through a women's '6<sup>th</sup> clan' and secure representation in the transitional government
- In Peru, women have created new participatory spaces for women in the current decentralisation process to ensure women's concerns are taken forward by local authorities, by establishing Gender Equality Committees and involving community women in the development and implementation of equality plans
- In Afghanistan, ordinary women have been able to have a say on their new Constitution and have learnt how to vote in elections through training and awareness-raising workshops

Far greater political commitment and resources are urgently needed to tackle the barriers which continue to constrain women's participation in public life and decision-making, such as economic dependency, illiteracy and limited access to education and the same work opportunities as men, discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and negative stereotypes, burden of responsibilities in the home, intimidation, harassment and violence and lack of access to information.

## Our recommendations

Specifically, WOMANKIND is calling for:

- The acceleration of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & Security, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and MDG 3 of the UN Millennium Development Goals, which set out clear principles and guidelines for ensuring women's full and equal participation in decision-making

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.womankind.org.uk](http://www.womankind.org.uk) to find out more about our work

<sup>2</sup> The number of countries that have achieved 30% remains low, increasing from 5 in 1997 to 10 in 2000, to 15 in 2004. The world average of women in national parliaments has increased from 11.7% in 1995 to 13.8 in 2000 and to 15.6 in 2004. Source: [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org) cited in 'Beijing Betrayed,' WEDO, 2005

<sup>3</sup> For further details about our partner's work to promote women's participation in decision-making, visit <http://www.womankind.org.uk/womens-civil-and-political-participation.html>

- The promotion of an enabling environment, meaning a political, legal, economic, social and cultural climate that allows women to engage in decision-making processes in a sustainable and effective way
  - Greater systematic use of benchmarks and targets and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress on women's participation in power structures and decision-making
  - Increased resources to tackle violence against women, educate women about their rights, enhance skills and information resources and promote shared work and responsibilities between women and men
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