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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”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

Statement submitted by Action Canada for Population and Development, Center for Health and Gender Equity, International Planned Parenthood Federation, IPAS and Population Action International, non-governmental organizations 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.6/2009/1.



Statement*

This year, the Economic and Social Council will once again examine the issue of “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS.” We would like to offer the following points for consideration in the panel discussions and plenary sessions.

First, we would like to draw attention to paragraph 4.27 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which states that: “Special efforts should be made to emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behaviour, including family planning; prenatal, maternal and child health; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies; shared control and contribution to family income, children's education, health and nutrition; and recognition and promotion of the equal value of children of both sexes. Male responsibilities in family life must be included in the education of children from the earliest ages. Special emphasis should be placed on the prevention of violence against women and children.”

In this context, we would like to comment on four specific issues:

1. Sexual violence against women and girls

We particularly welcome United Nations Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), which calls on Governments to debunk myths that fuel sexual violence and to take measures to particularly eliminate sexual violence against women and girls in conflict situations. We would like to see such measures also adopted and effectively implemented in daily-life situations, which is where women and girls often become victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. Men's responsibility for eradicating domestic and sexual violence is paramount; and programs to encourage men to exercise that responsibility are vital and need to be replicated in every community.

2. Broadening the scope of men's groups working to eliminate violence against women

The increasing number of men's groups working to eliminate violence against women do great work promoting gender sensitivity, gender equity and actions to reduce violence – both in men's personal and public lives. However, the topics of rape-related pregnancy, other unwanted pregnancies and reproductive choice rarely emerge in their publications and campaigns. We urge the members of these groups, and men everywhere, to take responsibility for reproductive rights as a men's issue, by actively promoting and supporting both safe motherhood and safe abortion. Such a recommendation in documents produced as a result of this agenda point would be welcome.

* Issued without formal editing.

3. Decision-making around contraceptive use, including condoms, and pregnancy

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, policies and programs around the world have sought to promote male acceptance and use of male and female condoms, primarily to prevent HIV and sexually-transmitted infections. Some work has been done as well to promote equal sharing of men and women in decision-making around contraceptive use and pregnancy. Such efforts need to be intensified.

4. Childcare and provision of financial support for children

Comprehensive sexuality education/family life education programs should also promote the responsibility and participation of boys and men in child care and provision of financial support for any children they father, either within or outside the context of marriage.
