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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

Statement submitted by New Japan Women’s Association, 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.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.



Statement*

1. Since its founding in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has been working, among others, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity of women around the world for peace. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, NJWA has attended United Nations sponsored world conferences on women and sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. It commits itself to the promotion of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and all other international agreements on gender equality and women's rights at the international, regional and national levels. About 200,000 NJWA members are engaged nationwide in various campaigns to achieve women's demands in communities and workplaces, learning and using these international instruments.

2. NJWA upholds nuclear abolition as the first of its five objectives. Towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May 2010, it actively carried out signature collecting for the petition calling for the start of negotiations on an international convention to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. Its members also sent out atomic bombing photos to women's organizations and sister cities around the world as a way to make known the real consequences of the use of atomic bombs. More than 250 NJWA members joined the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo) delegation, composed of 1,800 people, including 100 Hibakusha, A-bomb survivors, to participate in various actions in New York that gathered more than 1,500 NGOs from different countries.

3. The Japan Gensuikyo delegation brought nearly 7 million signatures, 1.5 million of which had been collected by NJWA members. These signatures were presented directly to 2010 NPT Review Conference President Libran Cabactulan, and to United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte in front of the United Nations Headquarters on 2 May, the day before the start of the NPT Review Conference. On 3 May, in his opening remarks, President Cabactulan referred to the signatures saying that they represented the message that State Parties should work very hard; redouble their efforts towards a world free of nuclear arms. In August, as the first United Nations Secretary-General to attend the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, Ban Ki-moon spoke at the ceremony calling for the conclusion of a convention to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. Concrete initiatives have started to achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We believe that the driving force that has made a difference is the effort of civil society in Japan and the world over, who have continued to call for nuclear abolition together with Hibakusha.

Priority theme: "Access and Participation of Women and Girls to Education, Training, Science and Technology, Including for the Promotion of Women's Equal Access to Full Employment and Decent Work"

4. The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 recognizes progress in girls' enrolment in education at primary and secondary schools since 1999. On the other hand, the World Bank reported in 2008 that among the 20- to 24-year-old

* Issued without formal editing.

population, women continue to lag behind men in labour force participation in all regions, indicating that women's educational attainment does not translate into employment opportunities. Women are more and more likely to be employed as non-regular workers; in Japan, for example, 53.5 per cent of female workers are non-regular workers and 69.5 per cent of those with non-regular jobs are women (Management and Coordination Agency, 2009). While more and more Japanese women are going on to higher-level education, 73 per cent of the working poor, who earn less than \$24,250, are women (National Tax Administration Agency, 2009). Under the financial crisis and economic recession, women continue to be the last to be hired and the first to be fired. An alternative to the neo-liberal economic policies should be sought.

5. Challenges still remain in approaching gender parity in education; gaps are still wide in developing countries and rural areas. In higher education, women are underrepresented in science and technology.

6. The background to these challenges is insufficient effort to eradicate gender stereotypes, low participation of women in policy and decision-making processes, and inadequate or lack of policies to address the disadvantages and discrimination facing girls and women. It is essential to accelerate the promotion and universalization of international agreements and legal instruments for gender equality and women's rights including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of its follow-up process, in a way to realize de facto equality in women's daily life.

7. Regarding access to employment, we would like to underscore the need for special measures for enabling women to continue working. To ensure that pregnancy and childbirth or care of elderly family members do not bring disadvantages to women, it is necessary to improve legislation and systems to facilitate equal sharing of family and work responsibilities between women and men. Education programmes and awareness raising efforts to promote gender equality are also important.

8. NJWA emphasizes the need for a gender-sensitive response in addressing the issues facing the international community as a whole, such as climate change, frequent natural disasters, increase in poverty and widening gaps between rich and poor. These are the challenges that could put the survival of humanity and the Earth at risk, if we fail to act now on the ground of financial difficulties. However, the 2010 Yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reveals that despite the financial crisis and economic recession that have affected most of the globe, worldwide military expenditure in 2009 totalled an estimated \$1,531 billion, an increase of 5.9 per cent in real terms compared to 2008. The allocation of resources must be drastically changed.

9. NJWA calls on the Governments gathering at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

- Establish and enhance mechanisms, including free education and incentives for parents, to guarantee all rights to receive education at all levels.
- Provide gender-sensitive and responsive school curricula and textbooks and female and male role models in areas where either of the two main sexes is underrepresented.

- Ensure that women's school attainment directly links to better employment opportunities, and improve labour conditions to enable women to continue working particularly through measures to achieve equal sharing of responsibilities. Facilities and a paid leave system for child care and nursing of elderly family members are important, and efforts are needed to increase the number of men taking such leave, and to reduce working hours. Recognize unpaid work done by women. Close the wage gap between women and men, and introduce temporary special measures to increase women in decision-making levels. Hold companies accountable to eliminate discrimination against women in employment.
- Improve legislative and other measures including awareness-raising programmes in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to eradicate gender stereotypes. Take the lead in collective efforts by those in education, in judicial fields and law enforcement, in public administration, and parliament, to enhance the visibility of the Convention as a tool for eliminating discrimination against women.
- Introduce temporary special measures and election systems centred on proportional representation to increase political participation of women, particularly in parliament. This is essential to realize gender-sensitive and responsive education and economic policies.
- Fulfil their obligations under Article 26 of the United Nations Charter and drastically cut military spending and redirect the resources to meet human and environmental needs including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Review theme: "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child"

10. Many reports show that violence against women and girls remains widespread while discrimination against them persists. Girls are most vulnerable to violence; up to 50 per cent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16 years of age (UNFPA, 2003). NJWA would like to recall that most victims of sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the Second World War were teenagers, who would suffer physical and psychological damage for the rest of their lives. Genital mutilation, forced early marriage, honour killings and other forms of violence continue, depriving girls of opportunities to empower and to become owners of their own lives. Gender-based violence against women in conflict situation and under military occupation or military presence is still prevalent. Impunity for any form of violence must end.

11. NJWA calls on the Governments gathering at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

- Actively provide support with more resources to various initiatives including the Secretary-General's "UNiTE" campaign.
- Enact or improve national laws banning violence with strict punitive provisions for perpetrators and protective measures for victims, in line with international law and human rights treaties including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Promote education and awareness-raising from the early stage of life that violence

constitutes a human rights violation. Promote science-based sex education together with the concept of reproductive health and rights.

- Strengthen legal restrictions on the use of stereotyped images and sexual exploitation of women in the media, including the Internet.
- Translate all the Security Council resolutions on women, 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889, into practice.
- Address poverty, unemployment and other problems that can trigger and foster violence. Redefine security based on the position of rejecting the use of force in resolving conflicts, and adopt security policy centred on human security. Work together to delegitimize war, which is the worst form of violence. For this, it is essential to have women equally participate in all decision-making processes regarding peace and security.

Creation of UN-Women

12. NJWA welcomes the creation of UN-Women and appointment of Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, as its first head, with the expectation that this will give momentum to the United Nations initiatives to promote the goals of gender equality, peace and development. We consider the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women the first one to be convened in the wake of the launching of UN-Women, as an excellent opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to fully support this newborn gender entity with adequate funding and staff.

13. NJWA looks forward to work together with UN-Women, and reiterates its commitment to strengthening partnership between the civil society and the United Nations for a peaceful, just and sustainable world where every human being can fully enjoy their rights and live in harmony.
