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**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”**

Statement submitted by Association internationale des droits de l’homme, 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

Association internationale des droits de l'homme (AIDH) was created in France in 1998. Its main goal consists in human rights education and sensitization, particularly with regard to women's and children's rights. The Association was accorded consultative status with the Economic and Social Council in July 2014.

The fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in New York in February 2015 will focus on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

That Conference, let us recall, led to the adoption of the above document on gender problems by 189 States, meeting in plenary session in order to promote and protect the rights of women and girls. The participating States' commitment to promoting women's rights in all spheres of personal, family, community, economic, social, cultural and traditional life is admirable.

Although the living conditions of women and girls have clearly improved throughout the world, the implementation of the Beijing Declaration is still running into challenges.

States are aware of gender problems but are still very far from the goals set at the Conference. Gender inequalities and discrimination against women are noted and denounced in all areas of life.

Despite timid progress achieved by women towards accessing the top echelons in enterprises, the glass ceiling is highly resistant.

In France, for instance, measures conducive to the presence of women in senior administration which were taken in 2012 made it possible to attain the rate of 40 per cent in 2017.

In 2014, in France, women's average remuneration was 19.4 less than men's. In that year, that ratio declined under 20 per cent for the first time, from 27 per cent not long ago.

Actually, the current French Government resolutely established gender parity in the Cabinet.

Although it also characterizes electoral lists, the gender parity objective is far from being attained in the French parliament.

Two decades after the Beijing Conference, women's full integration into the economic, political, social and cultural fabric, young girls' education and the elimination of violence are still pressing issues.

Rwanda has been the best pupil. After the latest parliamentary elections, held in September 2014, women occupy 51 of the 80 deputy seats, accounting for 63.75 per cent of the members of the National Assembly (compared to 56.3 per cent in the preceding legislature), in line with paragraph 12 of the Beijing Declaration, affirming the participants' commitment to the empowerment and advancement of women.

Certain countries have not wished to commit to gender equality, claiming that there are, in the family and in society, roles and areas exclusively reserved for men, while women and girls need the protection accorded to minors.

In certain areas, Côte d'Ivoire took a different stance, following the example of Senegal, which since 1984 has been implementing an appropriate gender policy in its defence forces. Thus, in May 2014 the Ivoirian Government issued a circular concerning the recruitment of girls into the gendarmerie, imposing as from the last quarter 2015 a 10 per cent quota for officers and non-commissioned officers.

The Association is strongly engaged in combating inequalities on the ground and virulently denounces any cases of inequity suffered by women.

On 1-30 June 2014, as in June 2013, the Association organized its traditional awareness-raising campaign against spousal violence through the social networks.

Spousal violence claims many victims throughout the world. In 2013, of the 146 persons who, according to a survey of the Ministries of the Interior and the Rights of Women, died in France as victims of their current or former companions' violence (a rate slightly lower than in earlier years), 121 were women.

Violence against women is inhuman, degrading and an offence perpetrated against the person in contempt of the provisions of national, regional and international legal instruments.

On 24 November 2012, the Association organized at the French National Assembly a symposium on violence against women in order to raise awareness of its harmful effects.

The Association underscores the need for women's economic empowerment, in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Women have a role to play in economic development and wealth distribution, where men have not succeeded.

Women's involvement in economic development will certainly contribute to building a social model better than today's. Yet men and women must partner up with a view to a more just world.

Economic empowerment can not be decreed. Unfortunately, women generally lack the means to create or progress within an enterprise. Some do not even know a trade. How then can they take initiatives and launch out?

Banks grant limited loans to women for lack of collateral.

These problems were addressed at a round table organized by the Association on 23 November 2013, highlighting constraints on women's entrepreneurial possibilities.

The economic empowerment of rural women must also be addressed.

Rural women are a pillar of profound economic, environmental and social reforms crucial to the development of the communities. Yet rural women are often neglected in the policies of States and United Nations agencies. How can they extricate themselves from their predicament?

How can they have enough to eat? Receive care? Provide for the education of their children, especially girls? Avoid genital mutilation, rape or forced marriage? Have access to land, from which they are often excluded on the basis of custom?

That situation is aggravated by global economic and food crises, civil wars, related human disasters and climate change.

On November 8, the Association organized in Paris a charity gala in support of rural women, particularly in order to finance small economic projects of rural women in Lobo, Cameroon, and Sibut-Pissa, Central African Republic.

Throughout the world, many agricultural workers are women, largely excluded from land because of medieval customs. Empowerment is crucial to the survival of those women, their families' and the rural communities, and to economic productivity in general.

In conclusion, we have come a long way since the unanimous adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by 189 States in 1995. Resistance is still observed here and there but there has been undeniable progress. Association internationale des droits de l'homme (AIDH) shall stay mobilized to urge States to complete the implementation of activities based on that Declaration and Platform for Action.
