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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”**

Statement submitted by Women’s Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace, 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

It is sobering that at this 25th anniversary year of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action there are still so many commitments left unfulfilled from among the Platform's twelve Critical Areas of Concern. The Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace, a partnership of nearly 20 independent, local women's rights organizations based in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, is urging governments to adopt measures that strengthen national machinery to monitor states' compliance with international women's rights treaties, mechanisms, and declarations, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the United Nations Security Council's Women, Peace, and Security resolutions, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Beijing Platform for Action's chapter on the Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women states that: "[a] national machinery for the advancement of women is the central policy coordinating unit inside government. Its main task is to support governmentwide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas." The Beijing Platform for Action describes specific criteria for the effective functioning of such mechanisms:

Location at the highest possible level in the government, falling under the responsibility of a Cabinet minister;

Institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate, as appropriate, decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring with a view to involving non-governmental organizations and community organizations from the grassroots upwards;

Sufficient resources in terms of budget and professional capacity;

Opportunity to influence development of all government policies.

Women's Learning Partnership is asking that the 65th Commission on the Status of Women evaluate states' progress on national machineries for women's rights over the past 25 years. We urge the Commission on the Status of Women to consider minimum standards for nations in implementing such national machineries, and to agree to a framework for evaluating their effectiveness.

Women's Learning Partnership recognizes that national machineries must be responsive to diverse cultures, local conditions, and political systems. What is effective in one country may not be valid for a country with a different geography, economy, and political system. But to have no minimum standards for the implementation of such machineries handicaps both the Commission on the Status of Women's ability to measure progress in this area and states' ability to meet their mandate.

Women's Learning Partnership is requesting that the members of the 65th Commission on the Status of Women call upon states to adopt minimum standards for national machineries monitoring states' compliance with international women's rights treaties, mechanisms, and declarations. These minimum standards for national machineries for women's rights should include, but not be limited to, the following mandates.

National machineries for women's rights must:

Have an appropriate location and priority within the government structure that allows them to be effective in influencing policy;

Have adequate financial and human resources;

Reach far flung constituencies beyond state capitals and urban centers;

Pursue strong links with civil society in order to assist women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to advocate for reforms that advance the rights of women;

Analyze, evaluate, and critique existing national policy frameworks;

Hold governments accountable for mainstreaming gender;

Assist government agencies, national institutions, and national regulatory bodies on gender-mainstreaming and collecting and using disaggregated data;

Design appropriate organizational structures and effective strategies for government agencies, national institutions, and national regulatory bodies;

Train trainers, government decision makers, and women leaders on the national commitments in law and policy on women's rights and advancement;

Use modern information technology, including social media, to disseminate information, form networks, and stay informed about developments in other countries, regions, and internationally.

Participants in the 1998 Expert Group Meeting on National Mechanisms for Gender Equality, held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Chile, concluded that one of the primary objectives of the work of national mechanisms for the advancement of women "is to create cultural change leading to the provision of an enabling environment for women's full participation in social, economic and political lives."

Over two decades later, the criteria, practices, and outcomes for such national machinery remains loosely defined and poorly regulated, slowing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations for women's equality and security laid out in United Nations resolutions, declarations, and platforms. To address this problem, members of the Commission on the Status of Women should recognize the need for minimum standards for national mechanisms for women's rights in the 65th Commission on the Status of Women's Agreed Conclusions.

Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace is a non-profit international women's rights organization, founded in 2000, comprised of a partnership of autonomous women's rights organizations, primarily from transitioning and developing societies. Women's Learning Partnership is dedicated to training and supporting women in the Global South to become leaders and advocates for a just, equitable, and peaceful planet where women's human rights are realized and protected. Women's Learning Partnership links feminist activists from the Global South to others throughout the North and South to share their knowledge and to work together. Women's Learning Partnership also serves as a women's rights resource center, collecting and preserving documents of historical relevance to the women's movement and producing research and training materials on women's advancement, human rights, and human security that we disseminate worldwide.

Women's Learning Partnership is made up of an international secretariat (based in Bethesda, Maryland) and our NGO partners in Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Senegal, Turkey, and Zimbabwe. While our partners operate independently, we share a common vision for women's equality, and share values and aspirations across the Partnership. In particular, we promote an egalitarian view of leadership, built on a participatory and democratic philosophy, that recognizes and promotes individuals' skills and contributions. Together, we are promoting women's mobilization by providing individuals and organizations with information, training, resources, and access to advocacy networks that share our objectives.