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Statement submitted by Misión Mujer, 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.



Statement

The importance of implementing prevention programs for adolescents as a way of eradicating violence: the case of Ciudad Juárez

According to the 2010 United Nations report, the total number of women in the world is 3,418,059,000, and the total number of adolescent girls (from 10 to 19 years of age) is 583,911,000. The total for Mexico is 57,481,307 women, of whom 10,585,059 are between 15 and 24 years according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography.

The data presented above impress upon us what a great number of women there are in the world; unfortunately, violence against women persists in every country in the world. It is a pervasive human rights violation and one of the main obstacles to achieving gender equality. Indeed, violence against women is so pervasive that it is an everyday occurrence. It is expressed through manifold forms of discrimination and exclusion exercised by society in the context of relationships of dominance and subordination: culture, economic inequalities, language, inequity in the division of labour in society, and many more. There are many other ways in which psychological violence may manifest itself, enforcing social acceptance and perpetuating such behaviours, while even women themselves may not experience it as aggression.

Violence prevents women from contributing to development and benefiting from it, as it limits their options and their ability to act. The consequences of that situation in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction should be among governments' main concerns. Violence against women also undermines the Millennium Development Goals and hinders their fulfilment.

Current situation in Mexico

- In 2006 it was estimated that some twenty-four million women 15 years of age and over — that is, 67 per cent of them — had experienced at least one act of violence in their lives, whether at the hands of their current spouse or partner, a former one, or a family member, or at school, at work or in public or community spaces
- For every 10 women now or formerly in a relationship, 4 have been subjected to violence by a partner at some point in their conjugal life
- The second-largest component is violence in public or community spaces, perpetrated by strangers; essentially this consists of acts of sexual assault and abuse or of theft
- For every 10 women in the workforce in 2005, 3 were subject to acts of violence in the workplace, primarily in the form of discrimination
- Five million women reported acts of violence perpetrated by a manager, teacher, employee or co-worker during their student life
- This past year, five and a half million women suffered aggression by someone other than their spouse or partner

The case of Ciudad Juárez

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua) has been the best example of a region that is beginning to develop an awareness of girls' and women's freedom and dignity and a respect for their lives. That encouraging development grows out of a sad and painful reality: the murders of women that have been occurring since 1993 and have become notorious both nationally and internationally.

The word "femicide" has come into use in the context of the human, political and social rights of victims and their family members; it is a feminist concept that distinguishes the victim from the aggressor and has made the issue of gender and violence visible during the transformation of Ciudad Juárez.

The gender violence against girls and women in Ciudad Juárez not only threw into stark relief the greatest threat to the community's women — emicide —, it also shed light on all the other forms of ill-treatment to which women are subject merely because they are women: for instance, violence perpetrated by a male partner and the abuse women endure in the private and public spheres, not only in their person but also in their belongings. The case of Ciudad Juárez also drew attention to the plight of Mexican women who die or are murdered in the course of their attempts to enter the United States of America. At the same time it pointed up the insecurity with which the border population lives, an insecurity whose prevention and eradication had been impeded by a lack of data.

Again, as regards Ciudad Juárez itself, the emergence of the maquiladora industry has increased women's vulnerability and separated families without making any provision for their well-being (girls being left alone at home). Inadequate urban infrastructure, the city's status as a magnet for migrants — men and women alike — and its insecurity for poor women, together with the apathy and callousness of border-town society, make the situation yet more complex.

In the light of the above, civil society is a key ally in dissipating this multifaceted threat to women. Hence, it is urgent to recognize and strengthen the endeavours and initiatives that have been undertaken in that regard by women's organizations, academia and the private sector, as well as by social and community-based movements and spokespersons. What is vital is for bridges to be built and a dialogue fostered between social institutions, on the one hand, and those persons keen to achieve strong and organized communities, on the other hand, in order to reach consensus on joint strategies that will promote the historic objective and ethical imperative of overcoming violence against women.

Public policies on the prevention of gender violence urgently need to be structured so as to reach young people, and must be directed both to women and to men so that men will feel that they, and their own gender's problems, are not being ignored. The social prevention effort seeks to anticipate and alter social, urban, economic and cultural conditions that create an environment of gender violence and spur processes of social disintegration, and to lessen the risk that such conditions will arise.

Our recommendation for action draws on the prevention model that has clearly served to mitigate violence in Guadalajara, León, Cancún and Ciudad Juárez. Through its Axios program, Misión Mujer, an organization with 13 years' experience in Mexico working with adolescents and young people, has achieved

cultural change by preventing psychosocial problems. This can be done by promoting assertive decision-making and a sense of self-worth among vulnerable groups. The organization's main objective is to bring about cultural change through preventive education for adolescents and young people, who receive counselling to help promote self-awareness, self-esteem and intrafamily communications and are given support in mapping out a life plan. In that way, problems such as addiction, low self-esteem, eating disorders, early pregnancies and a high incidence of school dropouts among adolescents, etc., may be prevented.

Given the above brief explanation of this case, and the proven effectiveness of the approach over the years, the organization proposes:

(a) To recognize and pay particular attention to the most basic rights every adolescent should have, but which are being violated: education, employment, health, participation and non-discrimination. Without these rights, their environment is a breeding ground for ongoing violence, both against women and within society in general;

(b) To restore the advantages — in terms of physical environment, social relations, and equal access to public programs and services — whose denial sparks violence. Those advantages may be tangible assets (sports fields or public places where youth groups meet), social events (tournaments or cultural activities), or a real sense of belonging (membership in religious groups, youth groups, organizations that promote gender equity);

(c) To work to promote a culture of peace, to provide skills training and citizenship skills for the purpose of participatory prevention of psychosocial risks, care and rehabilitation for victims of violence, and non-violent conflict resolution;

(d) With a focus on youth as strategic players in development, to seek coordination between the various regions, levels of government and other stakeholders: youth organizations, academia, the private sector and those involved in the comprehensive prevention policy we seek to implement;

(e) In public policy, to focus on measures to address the different needs of women and men, recognizing existing gender-based inequities.
