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Statement submitted by Endeavour Forum, 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

Ending violence against pregnant women and the girl child

The science of how we are created is fascinating. From the time we are conceived, we are as small as a dot, yet our DNA already determines if we are a boy or girl and how cells will differentiate to form the heart, lungs, liver, immune system, kidneys and pancreas; every muscle, bone, joint and blood cell; hair, ears, nose, mouth and limbs. We have a beating heart by three weeks, and visible arms, legs, fingers and toes by eight weeks. From approximately 10 to 12 weeks into a pregnancy, doctors can determine whether the child in the womb is recognizable as a boy or girl.

The violence begins in the womb. Tragically, this is when the extreme violence against the girl child begins. Tiny, but perfect, little girls are systematically poisoned, dismembered and/or decapitated while in the sanctuary of their mothers' wombs. Gender-selective abortions are done on the female child simply because she is a girl. The choice to abort one's daughter just because she is a girl should be unthinkable by all feminists!

Gender-selective abortions are the greatest form of exploitation, discrimination and violence against girls in our generation. Many reports document that it is a common cultural belief — especially in China and India — that boys are more “wanted” than girls. As a result, owing to sex-selective abortions, there are now 34 million more boys than girls under the age of 20 in China. Millions of girl children are targeted for abortion (death in the womb) or left to die after birth (infanticide). These antiquated customs and policies must be adamantly addressed by all Member States and condemned by the Commission on the Status of Women. We must form an alliance to protect the youngest and weakest of our girls who have no voice.

We also denounce the one-child policy in China, which forces and coerces pregnant women to abort their children.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”. Whether legal or illegal, no induced abortion is “safe” for the human child.

Violence against women: body, mind and soul

Legal abortion also causes much physical, psychological and spiritual damage to women. Misinformation, rhetoric and euphemisms that promote abortion as “safe and legal” and as a woman's own, private right to choose to have her child's life terminated without question abound in our modern world. Yet the research indicates this is not true. Since the legalization of abortion-on-demand, many women have suffered physically, psychologically and spiritually as a result. Hundreds of women in the United States of America alone have even died as a consequence of induced legal abortion.

Violence against pregnant women has increased dramatically. Homicide has become the leading cause of death among pregnant women. In many cases, women

are assaulted or killed for refusing to abort (choosing life for their baby). A high percentage of pregnant women reported being punched or kicked in the abdomen, usually by the father of the baby. These findings add to a growing body of evidence that link domestic violence and abortion.

In one study, 64 per cent of American women and teenage girls reported they were pressured to abort by others, and more than half said they felt rushed or uncertain about the abortion. In addition, more than 80 per cent of these said they did not receive adequate counselling prior to their decision to abort.

A large study in Finland reported higher rates of suicide for women after abortion. Women who had an abortion had a 650 per cent higher risk of death from suicide compared to women who carried their babies to term. A subsequent study, which controlled for prior psychiatric history, showed that the elevated suicide risk persisted for years after the abortion. In contrast, studies reveal a dramatic decrease in rates of suicide among pregnant women who let their babies live.

Teens are at much higher risk of a suicide attempt after abortion. University of Minnesota researchers found a tenfold increase in suicide attempts among teens within six months after their abortions. Another study found that 50 per cent of post-abortive teens (15-18 years old) had suicidal thoughts and behaviours — twice the rate of teens who chose not to abort.

Another study at a South African clinic found that 18 per cent of patients developed post-traumatic stress disorder after an abortion. More than 40 studies published in peer-reviewed journals with statistical controls and statistically significant results show that abortion is a risk factor for numerous psychiatric illnesses.

The largest study of rape victims ever completed indicates that most women not only experience severe trauma from the rape, but also experience additional trauma if they choose to abort the baby conceived by rape. Furthermore, 89 per cent of those who chose abortion regretted it, while none of the women who carried to term expressed regrets. In our view, with cases of incest, abortion allows the abuse to continue without discovery, again contributing to additional trauma.

Women also frequently suffer physical complications following abortion. One of the most significant of these complications is the increased risk of a pre-term birth in subsequent pregnancies, which has been researched in more than 20 countries and most recently confirmed by a large meta-analysis and a large systematic review. Pre-term birth is known to increase the risk of cerebral palsy and other disabling conditions for the child.

Dozens of credible worldwide studies also link breast cancer to induced abortion. It is our belief that legal abortion has become the greatest form of exploitation against pregnant women and pre-born children in our generation. Sadly, it is commonly used as a violent form of birth control. While the choice should be available to women as to why, when, where and with whom to have sex, when conception takes place, another human being exists — one whose life and dignity must be valued and regarded — and a choice should not be available to take that life away. Pregnancy is not a disease and abortion is rarely a medical necessity.

For the elimination and prevention of abortion violence against women and the girl child, we appeal to the Commission on the Status of Women and all Member States to:

- (a) Enact education and awareness campaigns on the value of the girl child, foetal development and the research on the damage of legal abortions to women's bodies, minds and souls;
- (b) Enact measures to end violence against pregnant women and babies;
- (c) Produce accountable and protective measures against perpetrators of forced and coerced abortion;
- (d) Enact legislation and policies condemning gender-selective abortions;
- (e) Enact screening and fully informed consent laws for pregnant women seeking an abortion that include options and practical help to support them and their babies, as well as prenatal support;
- (f) Procure accountability in the full reporting of abortions, complications/deaths and pregnant minors for possible statutory rape, rape or incest;
- (g) Provide the basic human right to life for babies in the womb according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

On behalf of thousands of former abortion patients around the world who have had legal abortions and who have suffered irreparable damage to their bodies, who have deep sorrow and regret, who have endured years of depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders and pain because of their abortions, we urge you to defend pregnant women and their girl children in the womb. A mother's womb used to be the safest place for a baby, but today that is no longer the case. We are a voice for our aborted children who had no voice. A person is a person, no matter how small. We should honour motherhood and bring back a culture of life to this earth. Abortion is not a black and white issue, it is blood red. It is a wrong and not a right.
