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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”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further
actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by Society for Human Advancement and Disadvantaged Empowerment, 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

Empowering people

We must end violence against women and girls so as to create fairer societies.

Violence against women and girls is practised throughout the world in many manifestations and forms and, in a few countries, it exists in its worst forms, such as honour killings. Such killing is indeed the worst kind of crime against humanity that can be found anywhere in the world.

The history of violence against women dates back to when women were viewed as property and were assigned a gender role, according to which they would be subservient to men. The unequal power relations between men and women led to a situation preventing women's advancement. Religious misinterpretations have also remained one of the main causes of violence against women.

In many societies today, discrimination against women on the basis of gender is mundane. Male children are, among other things, fed well, educated at good schools and provided with good health facilities, unlike female children. Male children are considered to be gifts from God and their birthdays are celebrated with great fervour. Girl children are raised to obey male family members because, according to men, girls are lower in status. Female family members cannot even start their meals unless the men do so first.

In these societies, killing women and girls in the name of honour has become socially acceptable, meaning that, when a woman in the household is killed in the name of honour by a male family member on petty grounds, other women in the household support that act.

In our male-dominant societies, women consider violence against them to be the due right of men. Domestically, women are victimized by their male intimate partners. One study shows that between 40 and 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by their husband or a close family relative.

The role of Governments in such societies has become weak, given that they are highly influenced by social norms, values, folkways and mores. They have prepared laws and rules to stop violence against women and girls, but are unable to implement them.

Rape or gang rape of women by soldiers during war and armed conflict is also one of the worst kinds of violence against women. Such crimes are recognized as crimes against humanity and war crimes, but are still practised widely. We at the Society for Human Advancement and Disadvantaged Empowerment condemn violence against women and girls in all its manifestations and forms as inhuman and barbaric. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations to draft conventions and charters for its Member States to reduce the incidence of violence against women and girls and to empower women throughout the world.

To prevent violence against women and girls, we request the United Nations to support a Member State only when it demonstrates good results in efforts to combat violence against women and girls at the national level.

We believe that, collectively, we can make this world a better place for women and girls. Responsible Governments have to make laws against violence against

women and girls and implement them in letter and spirit because they have a duty to ensure the safety of their citizens and to create a peaceful environment conducive to development and growth.

As a civil society organization, it is our duty to make a positive difference in the attitudes of people so as to reduce the incidence of violence against women and girls and thereby create fairer societies. As human beings, we have to accept and respect women's human rights and give up our harmful values and norms.
