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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 Integrated Development Services, 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

Introduction and background

Intercommunity Development Social Organization is a voluntary non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 2004 by peace-loving and law-abiding women and young people and dedicated to peacebuilding, education, health, the promotion of good governance and gender equality to improve the living conditions of vulnerable women, young people, children and other minority groups in Nigeria. Intercommunity Development Social Organization first registered, in 2005, with the Karu Local Government Authority and the Nasarawa State Government in 2011 as Integrated Development Services. On 20 April 2013, it was incorporated with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Corporate Affairs Commission and changed its name to Integrated Development Services. At its substantive session of July 2013, the Economic and Social Council adopted the recommendation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and granted Integrated Development Services special consultative status. The organization has submitted an application for the change of name to the Council, for consideration in 2014.

The mission of the organization is to promote the fundamental rights of vulnerable women, young people, children and other minority groups through peacebuilding, socioeconomic empowerment, health, education, the promotion of democracy and gender equality in Nigeria.

Our activities and donors

1. Production of a national documentary programme on the plight of young people, orphans and other vulnerable children in 2007, with support from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Abuja;
2. Research, design and production of HIV/AIDS strategic behaviour change and communication materials for nationwide distribution in 2009, with grants from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development;
3. Drilling of a community borehole to enhance access to potable water and sanitation through self-help at Kobusu Community (2011);
4. Mobilization and training of over 1,500 vulnerable women and girls in livelihood vocational skills and provision of start-up capital through revolving credit schemes, with grants from the United States of America for a special self-help project (2010-2011) and the African Women's Development Fund, Ghana (2013-2014);
5. Organization of national seminars and workshops on entrepreneurship development, market access, fundraising and sustainability strategies for women, young people, civil society organizations and other informal sectors to complement the efforts of the Government of Nigeria in achieving the post-2015 development agenda and the Nigeria Vision 20:2020 in Abuja, Plateau, Kaduna, Benue and Lagos States, with logistic and technical support from the National Bureau of Statistics, the Plateau State government and Yaba College of Technology Entrepreneurship Centre, Lagos in 2009-2013.
6. Advocacy visits and sensitization programmes and organization of a three-day seminar for northern Nigerian women activists to enhance their capacity to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria, with a grant and

logistics support from the Urgent Action Fund Africa, Kenya and National Human Rights Commission, Abuja from February to June 2013.

Women's situation in Nigeria

Gender imbalance permeates every facet of Nigerian society and comes in several forms. Gender discriminatory practices and violence against women and girl children are rampant. Violence against women is the most acute form of gender inequality in Nigeria. A great majority of this violence takes the form of harmful traditional practices against women. Some of the common harmful practices in our communities include female genital mutilation, child marriage, ritualistic widowhood practices, nutritional taboos, cult prostitution, domestic violence and sexual freedom for husbands. Other discriminatory practices include traditional land tenure systems and patterns of inheritance, lack of access to credit, family preference for sons, lack of participation in public decision-making, discrimination in housing and employment, discriminatory legislation, discriminatory religious practices, rape, battery, trafficking of women, murder, kidnapping and induced prostitution.

Role of women in Nigeria conflict resolution

The sectarian crises in Nigeria, including politics, religion, communion/ethics and the dreaded Boko Haram insurgency have claimed thousands of lives and huge displacements from homes. The nature of these conflicts also exposes civilian populations, particularly women and children, to violence, with an impact that is more visible in women because of the social services they render. Yet, they are sidelined when it comes to negotiating peace and facilitating the reconstruction of societies. Women's peace movements all over the world have broken new ground in developing strategies, organizations and tools for peace. Lack of access to political decision-making is the primary obstacle in the work of women peacebuilders.

The adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the first ever on women and peace and security, is the result of a very successful international campaign. The resolution urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. Boko Haram, an Islamist religious sect, has targeted Nigeria's police, rival clerics, politicians and public institutions with increasing violence since 2009. Some experts say the group should primarily be seen as leading an armed revolt against the Government's entrenched corruption, abusive security forces and strife between the disaffected Muslim north and Christian south and widening regional economic disparity in an already impoverished country. They argue that the Government should do more to address the issues facing the disaffected Muslim north. However, Boko Haram's suspected bombing of a United Nations building in Abuja in August 2011 and its ties to regional terror groups may signal a new trajectory and spark a stronger international response that makes it harder to address the north's alienation.

Mohammad Yusuf, a radical Islamist cleric, created Boko Haram officially in 2010, in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern State of Borno. The group aims to establish a fully Islamic state in Nigeria, including the implementation of criminal sharia courts across the country. Colloquially, the translation of "Boko Haram" is "Western education is sin", which experts say is a name assigned by the

State. The sect calls itself “People committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and jihad”. Some analysts say that the movement is an outgrowth of the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s and the religious and ethnic tensions that followed in the late 1990s. Many Nigerians believe that Yusuf rejected all things Western, but some argue that Yusuf, who embraced technology, believed Western education should be “mediated through Islamic scholarship”, such as rejecting the theory of evolution and Western-style banking.

Before 2009, the group did not aim to violently overthrow the Government. Yusuf criticized northern Muslims for participating in what he saw as an illegitimate, non-Islamic state and preached a doctrine of withdrawal. However, violence between Christians and Muslims and harsh Government treatment, including pervasive police brutality, encouraged the group’s radicalization.

Boko Haram followers, also called Yusuffiya, consist largely of hundreds of impoverished northern Islamic young people and clerics as well as university students and professionals, many of whom are unemployed. Some followers may be members of Nigeria’s elite.

Of all the dimensions of the insecurity challenges facing Nigeria, the menace of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northern part takes the cake. For a country that claims to be at peace, the death toll of the victims amounted to over 4,000 Nigerians in less than two years; it simply takes the wind out of the Government’s sails. Up till now, nobody, including security experts, seems to have the faintest idea of the alleged perpetrators behind the bloody and rampaging campaign, some of whom have been suicide bombers. The reasons proffered have, at best, been guesses and at worst, ludicrous ideas that have been feasted upon by the media.

Enhancing women’s capacity to participate in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria will help to ratify the processes of the international standards that sanction gender discrimination and inequality. Among such standards are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the commitment of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, which ensure that women and girl children have equal access to education, health care, adequate housing and employment and reduce the traditional cultural practices and beliefs prevalent in Nigerian society.

Women’s rights as human rights are indeed fundamental to societal growth and well-being. Gender inequality, discrimination and violence are anathema to human existence, healthy relationships and development. Ignorance contributes to gender discrimination and the violation of rights.

The organization will develop innovative capacity-building strategies to provide Nigerian women with knowledge and skills to effectively participate and mediate in respect of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria and other communion crises across the country and to advance the fundamental right of women to participate in the peacebuilding process.