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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 Sant Nirankari Mandal — Delhi, 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

This is a unique opportunity to focus on the cross-cutting theme of equal participation of women and girls for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The population explosion, the increasing power of science and technology and, most importantly, psychological attitudes, including gender-bias, have become a way of living on Earth. We are behaving as if the planet is a business in liquidation. This rightly occupies the attention of world leaders and the United Nations. Leading statesmen and scientists are openly saying that it is the right time to make a dramatic change in the pattern that now represents business as usual. We can fulfil the task but we will first have to change attitudes and awareness and recognize it as a spiritual issue, a challenge that goes to the core of who we are as human beings. For awareness and warmth, spirituality has a game-changing role to play in reminding us of our humanity.

An imbalanced gender ratio, a lower literacy rate, domestic violence, more responsibilities at home, nominal ownership rights, control over economic resources, sex trafficking and the risk of HIV infection are tantamount to hate crimes targeting a specific group: girls and women. Female foeticide marks the climax of the crime. The United Nations has rightly been creating worldwide awareness among Governments and non-governmental organizations to effectively combat discrimination and violence against women and girls through a variety of programmes.

In the Indian context, studies have shown that patriarchy makes women powerless in many ways, for example, by convincing them of their inferiority to men; by making them conform to certain stereotyped roles and behaviours; by denying them control over their own bodies; by limiting their access to resources; and by restricting their opportunities to participate in decisions that affect even their own lives. The level of male response to women varies according to geographical zones, cultures, societies and religions. In a study conducted and published in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 1997, it was suggested that gender equality cannot come about only through changes in women's condition, but requires transformation of the structures and systems that lie at the root of women's subordination and gender inequality.

With the Sant Nirankari Mandal — Delhi, spiritual awakening is the bedrock that provides strength to social and cultural norms. The spiritual awakening stands for realization of the fatherhood of God, the spontaneous by-product of which is the emotional and universal brotherhood of mankind. In the Vedas, the entire human race was visualized in the form of one human being. This view has been endorsed by all the acknowledged scriptures of the world. The organization also believes and preaches that same divine light dwells in every human being, males and females, comprising one global family, shunning the feelings of hatred, superiority and discover that the same string of soul passes through every human being. Thus spiritual awakening brings basic changes in one's thoughts and actions resulting in feelings of oneness that wipes out differences of gender. This is that fundamental truth around which the organization has knit its world of equality and above all equity. This reform is introduced to the conscience of individuals.

Legal enactments have not proved sufficient to contain violence against women. Economic development also does not exclusively provide base for change in the situation. To illustrate, the example of the state of Haryana in India is worth quoting. The economic development which this state has seen during the last 40 years has not brought about any radical change in the status of women there. On the other hand, the example of the state of Kerala is cited to prove that economic development affects the condition of women only if it is supplemented by the level of literacy and education. This means that primarily, self-awakening harmonizes the relationship between men and women.

The organization feels that laws, regulations and enactments only impose external conditions on the people but do not bring about changes in the general outlook of an individual that is necessary for internal reform. This reform can be introduced to the conscience of individuals by awakening one about the universal oneness and brotherhood. The organization has always been engaged in making people aware about the eternal truth and that is practical knowledge of the existence of all pervading God. When one comes face to face with God, the father of every subject and object, then the feelings of misdemeanour towards others are eliminated, or controlled, resulting in change in general behaviour of a person. This changed behaviour results in creating the feelings of patience, love, tolerance, serenity and general well-being of one and all. There remains only a human being, not a man or a woman.

In the backdrop of such a spiritual environment the feelings of ill-will or hatred get evaporated in the normal internal process of behavioural change without forcing one externally to shun violence, and are replaced by the feelings of selfless service, love towards one and all, and compassion. This is what is required to carry out a permanent change in the behaviour of the people to leave an impeccable impact, which cannot be brought out by legislation. The inner change is the basic Mantra for a permanent peace in the house, the society and the world.

The Mandal and its followers always treat women with the profoundest respect, regard and honour as they play a much more important role than men in all societies. The social welfare department of the organization continuously works for the empowerment of women in many ways. The organization's principle of divinity revolves around the genderless existence of human-beings. Gender only facilitates God's system of reproduction and this cannot be the base for any discrimination.

The organization's two Voluntary wings engage in selfless service to mankind in need, proving the axiom "service to human, is worship of God". The organization's unparalleled voluntary blood donation campaign is not merely a customary religious ritual, but also the highest sacrifice towards mankind in general. A special feature of this blood donation campaign is that women feel equally enthusiastic.
