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Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-eighth session

10-21 March 2014

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 Women for Women’s Human Rights: New Ways, 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

Women for Women's Human Rights: New Ways welcomes the priority theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls".

We acknowledge Member States for their final push for the inclusion of the Millennium Development Goals as a significant input to the future post-2015 development agenda in the outcome document of the Special Event to follow up on efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals held in September 2013. However, we are greatly concerned that without a holistic perspective and the political will for a transformative shift in the existing paradigms of sustainable development, necessary to ensure a genuinely global development agenda both in the South and in the North, a truly sustainable post-2015 development agenda will not be achieved.

We would like to draw the attention of the Commission to four key demands and points:

(a) **Gender equality.** We are concerned that terms such as "empowering women and girls" are too vague, and demand that they be replaced in the post-2015 development agenda with a "stand-alone goal on gender equality" that would include elimination of all forms of discrimination against women;

(b) **Gender quality as a cross-cutting theme throughout the post-2015 agenda.** We urge the Commission to call for the inclusion of "gender equality" as a cross-cutting theme of the post-2015 development agenda. The majority of the world's poorest people are women and girls. It is estimated that women account for two thirds of the 1.4 billion people currently living in extreme poverty and make up 60 per cent of the 572 million working poor in the world. The gender gap in employment is very pervasive in almost all countries. The root causes of feminized poverty are embedded in deep-seated patriarchal patterns of discrimination, causing women to receive lower wages, own less property, have less access to education and health services and be more vulnerable to the hardships of poverty and environmental degradation. As recognized by the World Bank, trade unions and many other economic institutions, closing the gender gap in labour participation will significantly contribute to decreasing poverty and boosting national income. We also ask the Commission to call for a shift in economic power, opportunities and entitlements in favour of the poor and marginalized, especially women and girls;

(c) **Sexual and reproductive health and rights.** We call for the inclusion of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, encompassing, among others, access to safe abortion without any restrictions, especially in cases of sexual violence, including rape and sexual abuse in the family; the revision of abortion laws, where necessary, that prevent women and girls from accessing safe abortion services; access to emergency contraception and provision of free contraception to marginalized women, without requiring spousal or parental consent; holistic and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception, maternity care, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; protection of the right of adolescents and youth to formal and non-formal comprehensive sexuality education to enable them to control their sexual and reproductive health and decide freely and responsibly in such matters;

(d) **Women, peace, security and sustainable development.** We urge all Member States and relevant United Nations bodies to recognize the indissoluble link between gender equality, peace, security and sustainable development and its importance in the post-2015 development process.
