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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 *Corporación para la Investigación, el
Desarrollo Sostenible y la Promoción Social*, 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

The *Corporación para la Investigación, el Desarrollo Sostenible y la Promoción Social* [Corporation for Research, Sustainable Development and Social Advancement] has been working for 18 years to implement government policies in Colombia, with a focus on fostering community development and overcoming extreme poverty by sponsoring the creation of social spaces that are free of gender-based violence.

One of the policies in which the organization is involved as operator is the *UNIDOS* ["United"] strategy, designed by the national government to address the situation of extreme poverty and vulnerability that afflicts more than 1.5 million families in the country. This strategy deliberately applies the differential focus to the development model for vulnerable communities affected by the domestic armed conflict, thus generating an appropriate programmatic platform for dealing with gender-based sexual violence and family violence as factors that perpetuate poverty.

As operator of the *UNIDOS* strategy in 14 municipios in the southern part of the country, the organization works with some 75,000 people, of whom 53% are women. Of this group, 51% are single mothers responsible for families averaging four persons; 36% of this group are illiterate, and require special efforts. These mothers have suffered the ravages of the domestic armed conflict and have been obliged to take over the running of their households.

Within the region, the principal elements of violence against women are identified as violence caused by the domestic conflict, which has sparked mass displacements, murders, family disruption and its attendant effects, where those who suffer most are women and children, family decomposition and loss of values that lead to high levels of family violence and gender-based sexual violence. All the evidence suggests that the primary victims are women and children, leading to phenomena such as premature pregnancy (the adolescent pregnancy rate exceeds 16%). The poor quality of sexual education, values and unfamiliarity with family planning methods and responsible sexuality are holding back achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

To address these issues, the organization's team is working to mobilize entities, institutions and programs present in the municipios and to activate measures for dealing effectively with each of the issues that relate in particular to women. In this respect, it also manages intervention by the United Nations and some of its agencies such as the World Food Program to strengthen and generate capacities for preventing family violence and gender-based violence and for strengthening family dynamics so as to empower women as development agents and the cornerstone of society, taking advantage of strategies such as food in exchange for training.

In addition to these activities, the organization provides coaching in household management and sponsors community workshops, film showings, sexual education and delivery of contraceptive methods to adolescents and young adults, it promotes healthy emotional expression within the family, and the opening of spaces for family and community communication.

In its work with public agencies and programs, the organization promotes linkages that have allowed the definition and activation of channels for delivering

public services in the municipios to families with which it engages in specific promotion and monitoring work.

To make further progress towards the Millennium Development Goals will require time, resources and work, recognizing that a permanent and ongoing effort will be needed to restore the social fabric and to encourage citizen participation, education and changes in thinking for human development.

It is this violence against women in all its social aspects that demonstrates the cultural limitations of Colombian society and that shows the need for a differential approach to community, political, social, cultural and economic dynamics in the country. The organization promotes the general commitment of Colombian society and the government to involving women actively in the pursuit of development, justice and equity.

In this respect, recognition of rights and gender equity are insufficient in light of the systematic mistreatment that women have suffered in the country's rural areas. The country has made progress but more decisive and sustained action is needed to turn the situation around, especially in areas where the conflict has been most acute.

In all its social projects, the organization takes into account gender equity and a differential focus in its interventions, regardless of the source of financing (public or private sources, or international cooperation).
