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Statement submitted by Foundation for Human Horizon, 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, entrepreneurship and the Millennium Development Goals

I would like to narrate my story to inspire my sisters all over the world. I was a high school dropout, a domestic violence survivor, a child bride, an untouchable and a suicide attempt survivor. I battle odds that are heavily stacked against me. A Dalit woman from one of the poorest slums in Mumbai, I became the Chair of a multi-million dollar venture. I was born in a nondescript village in Maharashtra. Then, as a child bride, I settled in the slums of Mumbai. Now, I have business ventures in India, the United Arab Emirates, Africa and the United States of America. I want to share my struggles as a businesswoman who has transcended race, religion and nationality.

My troubled childhood was marred by the constant ridicule of non-Dalit neighbours and acquaintances. All this came to a crashing end when I was married off to a man and had to move, lock, stock and barrel, to the slums of Mumbai. Marital abuse drove me back to my village, where I did some odd jobs before deciding to end my life. Yes, I attempted suicide by consuming a considerable amount of insecticide. Luckily, I was rescued by my aunt. This miraculous, life-changing experience made me take an oath that I would do something great in my life before I died.

In Mumbai, I worked night and day in the hosiery field. Then, with the backing of government loans, I ran a thriving furniture business. I then realized the potential of the real estate business and quickly shifted base in the aftermath of my second husband's abuse. I went on to construct a residential-industrial complex that I sold in 1997 for a tidy profit. From then on, there was no looking back for me as a woman entrepreneur. I believe in the age-old mantra of hard work and persistence, given that they are the two pillars that have backed me on the route to success.

My most startling achievement came in 2006, when I took over Kamani Tubes Limited, an ailing business that was embroiled in more than 140 civil lawsuits and faced an insurmountable barrier in the form of enormous debt. In subsequent years, I managed to turn the company into an extremely profitable venture and I have joined the league of self-made women millionaires.

In a nation where Dalits are even now looked down upon by many members of society, my success story fosters the belief that nothing can stop a woman who is willing to fight through all the odds.

This year, I was awarded India's highest civilian award as a Dalit entrepreneur by the President, Pranab Mukherjee, who made clear in his speech that each woman has potential, but the Government and public policymakers need to harness that potential.
