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### Commission on the Status of Women

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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”** **[[bold]]**

### **Statement submitted by Centa for Organisational Development, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The world's most populous black nation located in Sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 170 million people has in the period under review recorded incremental steps in the advancement of women and girls in the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform to Action, namely: Women and Poverty, Media, Economic Empowerment, Environment, Health, Armed Conflict, Human Rights of Women, Violence Against Women, Institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, Education and Training of Women, The Girl Child, as well as Women in Power and Decision Making.

The 1995 Beijing Conference provided a unique opportunity for women to become critical parts of the decision making process in matters relating to economic, political and social advancement the world over. In response to this call, The National Commission for Women established in 1989 metamorphosized into the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development in 1995 as an institutional mechanism for the advancement of women and Girls in Nigeria.

In 2003, the Nigerian government passed the Child Rights Act, and the Universal Basic Education Act which made compulsory the right of every Nigerian child to six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The Act also stipulated 18 years as the minimum age for marriage. Twenty four out of the 36 states of the federation have passed both the Universal Basic Education Act and the Child Rights Act.

Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan has also shown deep commitments to advance the cause of women by surpassing the 35 per cent Affirmative action in the appointments of women into the Federal Executive Council of his administration. Thus, for the first time in the history of Nigeria, women occupied senior and very strategic ministerial positions such as Petroleum, Finance, Defence, Education as well as the appointment of the first female Chief Justice of the Federation, Aloma Mariam Mukhtar.

The President's transformation Agenda which is hinged on Nigeria becoming one of the world's 20 largest economies by 2020 also known as Vision 20:2020 has "Special Interest on Women" aimed at engendering human and national development through equitable contribution of the Nigerian women, men and children. This mandate keys into the core principle of "Gender Equity and Women Empowerment" stipulated in the National Gender Policy of 2007, to bring about sustainable human development and a just society devoid of discrimination based on sex.

The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund was set up in 2011 as a strategy of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development with support from development partners and other stakeholders to pull resources towards increasing women's participation in elective positions. The fund is used for sensitization, awareness creation as well as mobilization of women in all levels of governance — federal, state and local.

Beyond the trust fund, the present administration has continued with the two microcredit schemes set up in 2007 to assist women's access to micro finance. They are The Women Fund for Economic Empowerment and The Business Development

Fund for Women. Both schemes are managed by Bank of Industry as revolving facilities with an interest rate of 10 per cent per annum.

In the area of Health, The Nigerian government in 1999 established The National Health Insurance Scheme as a Public Private Partnership program that seeks to provide accessible, affordable and qualitative healthcare for all Nigerians. Contributions to the scheme are earnings-related where the employer pays 3.25 per cent while the employee pays 1.75 per cent, representing 5 per cent of the employee's consolidated salary. For the private sector programme and other tiers of Government, the employer pays 10 per cent while the employee pays 5 per cent representing 15 per cent of the employee's basic salary. However, the employer may decide to pay the entire contribution. The employer may also undertake extra contributions for additional cover to the benefit package.

Nigeria's prompt containment of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease brought into the country by late Amos Sawyer from Liberia speaks volumes of the impact of the Health Sector within this administration. This is such that the World Health Organisation on 21st October 2014 declared Nigeria an Ebola free country after six weeks of no new infection.

Only the formal sector, especially, the federal workers are currently enjoying the National Health Interview Survey scheme while the extension into private sector and the informal sector is slow. An assessment of coverage so far, revealed that the majority of Nigerians are still outside the scope of the National Health Interview Survey and unless the coverage is extended to the informal and private sector, the majority of the excluded beneficiaries will be women.

In January 2012, the decision to partially remove the subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit as part of the progressive deregulation of the petroleum industry was announced by the government. Accordingly, the President set up the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme.

Specifically, the aim of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program Maternal and Child Health Programme Intervention in Maternal and Child health is to reduce maternal, new born morbidity and mortality through the utilization of cost benefit analysis. Some of the specific activities undertaken are: (a) Employment of skilled Health Workers- Midwives, Community Health Workers and Village Health Workers (b) Upgrading, Equipping and Supplying of Drugs to 500 PHCs across the Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. (c) Selection of 125 General Hospitals across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory and equipping and upgrading their Maternity section to provide comprehensive intervention for complicated maternal and child cases from PHCs (d) Offering of cash Incentives are being offered to pregnant women, to uptake the use of the Public Health Commands after completing or fulfilling certain conditions.

In addition, the YouWiN! (Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria) Programme, an innovative annual Business Plan Competition, is targeted at aspiring young Nigerian entrepreneurs. The 2012 (second) round of the entrepreneurial scheme — YouWIN Women, was designed exclusively for female entrepreneurs, age 45 or less.

Most women have no title to property, which in many cases hinders access to certain types of support, for example, access to credit.

For most women the fundamental “rights” of ownership — the right to manage and the rights to income are curtailed by male dominance, which creates the need or necessity to validate/legitimize decisions and, as a result, whittles down their income.

Citizenship for Nigerian women is more guaranteed internationally than at home. A woman married to a man from a state other than her state of origin — usually her father’s place of birth — she may be disenfranchised in her husband’s state. Nigerian women cannot confer Nigerian citizenship on her foreign spouse.

Absence of affirmative action in the Constitution is a barrier to women’s increased political participation.

Hundreds of thousands of women fled their homes due to ethno religious crises. This has been worsened by Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 in North East Nigeria where over 270 school girls were abducted from their school while writing the 2014 West Africa Examinations. Six months after they have yet to be released.

8.5 Million Nigerian children are currently out of school or not attending any school. More than 50 per cent of this number are girls in Northern Nigeria where the gender gap remains particularly wide and the proportion of girls to boys in school ranges from 1 girl to 2 boys to 1 to 3 in some States.

Many children do not attend school because their labour is needed to either help at home or to bring additional income into the family. Many families cannot afford the associated costs of sending their children to school such as uniforms and textbooks. For others, the distance to the nearest school is a major hindrance. Another cause of low enrolment, especially in the North, is cultural bias. Most parents do not send their children, especially girls, to school and prefer to send them to Qur’anic schools rather than formal schools. Even when children enrol in schools, many do not complete the primary cycle. According to current data, 30 per cent of pupils drop out of primary school and only 54 per cent transit to Junior Secondary Schools.

Although Nigeria has indeed made incremental steps towards the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern of the platform for Action, women and girls in Nigeria still suffer deprivations based on sex, religion and ethnicity. They are grossly disadvantaged.