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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”**

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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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, recently released by the United Nations Women (October 2014), has once again established the importance of gender equality for sustainable development beyond being “a moral and ethical imperative” (p. 7). The plight for sustainability that is to mend the shortages and failures of the Millennium Development Goals in the post-2015 period cannot afford to ignore and in any way neglect the role of women as both beneficiaries and practitioners of the newly forged Sustainable Development Goals. As the United Nations Women report says, “women should not be viewed as victims, but as central actors in moving towards sustainability” (p. 7).

The centrality of women’s roles and gender equality for sustainable development has long been in the agenda of the United Nations, starting from the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by member states in 1995.

The insufficient focus on women in the Millennium Development Goals has led to a stronger emphasis on gender equality and gender perspectives in all areas of development in the outcome document of the Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, which laid down the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı has decided to undertake its role as a civil society entity to promote the centrality of gender equality for sustainable development. On 31 May-1 June 2014, it organized the Istanbul Summit as a multi-stakeholder forum with a distinct civil society and gender-sensitive perspective. The title of the first meeting of this forum was ‘Women’s Perspectives on the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda’ which aimed to ensure that the views of women were adequately represented in the discussions to establish the Sustainable Development Goals.

The significance of the topic was affirmed by 300+ participants from 45 countries, including members of non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, academics, activists and journalists, with an overwhelming majority of women.

The summit included panel sessions on 31 May, on the economic, social and environmental dimension of sustainable development, featuring experts who were attentive to gender equality and the lack of it in their analyses. On 1 June, the participants attended seven different parallel working groups. At the end of their working session, each group presented five final statements to conclude their suggestions, which ultimately formed the Working Groups Outcome document for The Istanbul Summit. A Parliamentary Roundtable was held simultaneously with the working groups, with a group of parliamentarians from: Benin, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Norway, Switzerland, Tanzania, and Ukraine. Their Call for Action was declared as a final document.

Thus, Istanbul Summit 2014 was concluded with three final documents: The Final Declaration, Working Groups Outcome and Call For Action of the Parliamentarians. Therefore, a comprehensive step for an inclusive and smart sustainable development was taken with the voices of different quarters of the international community.

From the Final Declaration

This declaration outlines the general principle of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and emphasizes the role of civil society from women's perspectives, as highlighted in the discussions.

General principles on Sustainable Development Goals

Women's empowerment is the cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive development. This encompasses:

- The rights of women in terms of access to health (especially to reduce unacceptable levels of maternal mortality), education and productive resources and opportunities including safe and secure employment conditions.
- Elimination of discrimination in all forms and violence against women and girls.
- Recognition that peace and development are inextricably linked and that peace cannot be achieved without women's empowerment.

In light of the above points, the group proposes gender equality before the law, in the workplace and in the home as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated into all other goals.

The Summit emphasizes the need for smart and inclusive sustainable development that respects peoples and the planet.

The Summit prioritized and emphasized interlinkages among the following issues: women's empowerment, eradication of poverty, health, education, food security, water supply, sanitation, environment, climate change, energy, sustainable economic development, peace and good governance.

The summit calls for the universality of Sustainable Development Goals for all people in all countries.

The role of civil society

The Summit helped to increase the awareness of civil society that the process of formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals provides many opportunities and indeed encourages their input.

The Summit also recognized the importance of civil society in the implementation of goals, including monitoring progress and ensuring accountability.

The Summit encourages governments to work in collaboration with civil society and the private sector.

The Summit urges the participants to reach out and mobilize their networks and communities to actively engage in post-2015 sustainable development agenda at local, national and global levels.

Working Groups Outcome

Women's Empowerment

There is abuse and violation against girls and women. All forms of violations should be eliminated.

The working group wants to support the stand-alone goals for Sustainable Development Goals.

Non-Governmental Organizations should be empowered to educate the public on the different conventions and protocols.

Female leaders and role models in the media need to be encouraged.

Poverty is still a challenge. The economic empowerment of women has to be guaranteed. Lives of the women have to be improved.

Environment, Climate Change and Energy

The main burden of lowering carbon emissions and compensating for the damage lies within the countries with the highest average of carbon emission (in proportion to their population).

Damage to biodiversity should be immediately stopped as it is irreversible, while new ways of production compatible with biodiversity should be found and promoted.

Natural resources (including water and land) should be managed in a transparent, participatory and accountable way involving all stakeholders particularly the locals.

Awareness should be raised about the environmental consequences of our lifestyles and consumption patterns through education and communication for sustainable development and conscious action/efforts to change these should be encouraged and supported.

Women's active participation in decision-making in environmental issues at all levels should be encouraged, facilitated and ensured.

Eradication of Poverty

Make it easier for women to access loans without collateral: Using intellectual capital to secure loans.

The best way to fight poverty is to turn the poor into active producers.

Government should provide land for women groups.

To use cultural and natural heritage of the community to generate income and to promote cultural identity.

To put in place global systems that support intellectual property laws by making special certification and collective marks for local products in order to protect the future of creativity for all, especially women.

Health

Recommend adequate investment in health systems and strengthening of infrastructure and development of economic and social policies to respond to health care needs of women and girls.

Ensure responsiveness of health systems to physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls across the lifecycle with attention to all forms of inequities.

Recognize the importance of national level implementation and the role of civil society and other relevant bodies in mobilization and in implementation of policies and programs related to women's and girls' health.

Ensure the realization of woman's and girls sexual and reproductive health and rights and take proactive measures to raise awareness on their health care needs, as well as the elimination of social and cultural barriers to ensure empowerment of women, girls and communities particularly in relation to comprehensive education and information on sexual and reproductive health.

Urge governments to give particular attention to comprehensive health care needs of women, specifically those in relation to non-communicable diseases, mental health and neglected tropical diseases through a life course.

Sustainable Economic Development

To encourage women not to fall into the trap of male hegemony, women should be encouraged, educated and motivated to be part of sustainable economic development. They need to understand that it is essential for them to be in the policy making process.

To remove the barriers to enter the labour force market, women should know that they will be provided with equal opportunities and would not face any wage differences because of gender.

Governments should take an initiative to create positive discrimination for the sectors that women are more likely to participate in. Government budgeting should be gender sensitive and gender responsible.

In the sustainable economic development process, society needs to be aware of the role that women play in the family unit.

Sustainable economic development is not possible without the realization of the role that gender plays in the management of scarce resources in the household level. Women need to educate their children to be aware of the scarcity of resources and how to use them wisely.

Education

Inclusive education of parents, schools, Non-Governmental Organizations, government agencies, leaders, children with special needs, school owners, specialists, administrators, media, scientists. Intersectoral communication is needed.

Global approaches and local implementations. Cultural and traditional networks should be in the process of implementation. Cultural and traditional sensitivities must be respected. The opening of the curriculum for local needs is to

be underlined as well. An education that meets the needs of the local society has to be established through the awareness of local necessities and sources.

It is important to bring children to school and keep them in school until they graduate. Start as early as possible in cooperation with the family, even starting from pregnancy.

Children must have the right to be educated in their native language.

Sexual education both for girls and boys is important.

Peace and Good Governance

To adopt an integrative approach in regards to gender, governance, institutions and issues.

To support women on a basis of meritocracy in order to reduce violent conflict, this is a limiting factor to all other issues including gender and governance.

To increase the impact of civil society by creating networks, by identifying and sharing success stories through self-empowerment and by learning best practices from a broad array of organizations and cultures.

To promote a worldview that is informed by a gender paradigm, which is inclusive, collaborative and integrative.

To promote and strengthen an infrastructure and culture of peace which can sustain the momentum of agreements and peace treaties towards full implementation.

Parliamentarian Roundtable Session Outcome:

We need to ensure that more girls get education at all levels, so that they can be involved in society and contribute to peace.

As far as developing countries are concerned, education is key. With education, the mindset will change. In developing countries, locations of schools are also important in order to provide better access to education for girls. Education will reduce the submissiveness of women to a great extent.

Reproductive rights and health education for all women are essential. Promotion of free family planning could also help.

Women's access to money and resources as well as equal partnership in leadership must be ensured.

Equal payment for the same job for both genders must be assured.

Women should be allowed to bring their own ideas in policy making instead of merely following men's steps.

We should work for the removal of gender-bias in policymaking and ensure a human-focused approach.

Gender equality should be emphasized in budgeting and women entrepreneurship should be encouraged.

Women's participation rate in the parliamentary and decision-making positions should be increased.

For developed countries, leadership skills and basic business skills are needed for women.

More women should take active roles in peacebuilding, arbitration and peace education.
