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Statement submitted by Women’s Board Educational Cooperation Society, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Unhealthy effect of unwholesome education

It is true that enrolment of women in schools has increased all over the world in the last twenty years since the Beijing Conference in 1995, but we cannot overlook the fact that notwithstanding efforts being made to eliminate illiteracy and drive human development, there are still so many women who do not have access to basic education in Nigeria due to a number of factors.

The schooling facilities in the rural areas are very poor. There are no adequate structures, human resources, teaching aids and books to facilitate proper learning in these areas. The issue of cultural value is also a big problem that affects the level of education of the girl child/women especially in the northern part of Nigeria.

The poverty level, which is quite high in the rural areas, makes it difficult for families to send their female children to school; the choice is always to train first the boys who it is believed will take care of the family responsibilities unlike the girl child who will get married and bear the name of another family.

When education is broadly shared and reaches the poor, women and marginalized groups, it holds out the prospects of economic growth. Developing countries can also do more — by making education a priority in their budgets for cooperation with global partners.

Even among those that have access to education, mainly in urban and suburban areas, very few are receiving a well-rounded, wholesome and humanistic education. We readily perceive that quality education is still lacking and even the basic education sometimes may not get to the level to be regarded as basic; it is pre-basic.

Education is not just school enrolment. Quality education is holistic and integral and it focuses on the dignity of the human person in its entire dimensions — social, economic etc. Wholesome education should also take into account the transcendent character of man as well as integrating learning and character formation. When education is not grounded on such humanistic foundation, it does not readily transform into a tool to combat violence, discrimination, substance abuse, intolerance, sexual promiscuity, fundamentalism, terrorism etc.

Education equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to increase income and expand employment opportunities. There is a great need to shift from basic education that merely emphasizes school enrolment to holistic quality education. It is only a holistic and integral quality education that empowers, eradicates all forms of poverty, prevents exclusion of minority groups and builds peace; because it focuses on the dignity of the human person and on character building.

Education remains a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Government and all stakeholders should endeavour to provide integral education to speed up human development at all levels.