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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”**

Statement submitted by Abiodun Adebayo Welfare Foundation, 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

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence has become a major issue in recent times. It reflects the extent to which women's human rights are threatened, thereby leading to women remaining voiceless on many of the issues concerning and affecting their lives. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence and rape, is widespread and results in their increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. In Nigeria, harmful traditional practices, meant to control women's sexuality, have led to great sufferings. Notable among them is the practice of female genital mutilation, which is a violation of basic rights and a major lifelong risk to women's health. Another major violence against women is the insalubrious attitude of wife-beating and women trafficking.

The underlying force behind this behaviour is the belief that women are inferior and are supposed to be treated as second class citizens in the society. In order to tap into the potential of women, gender sensitive policies that entrench equity between men and women are key.

Equal relationships between men and women in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the physical integrity of the human body, require mutual respect and willingness to accept responsibility for the consequences of sexual behaviour. Sensitivity and equity in gender relations enhance and promote respectful and harmonious partnerships between men and women. However, women who are economically disadvantaged are less likely to escape from any form of violence.

The patriarchal nature of our society renders women socially disadvantaged and excluded from benefitting from most economic opportunities. How will the change happen for a woman with no chance to be economically independent?
