



## Economic and Social Council

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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”**

### **Statement submitted by Amis des étrangers au Togo, 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**

Dear Sisters and Mothers, the NGO Amis des étrangers au Togo informs you on:

### **Women and human rights in Togo**

Togo accords priority to the promotion and protection of the rights of women, whose number is estimated to exceed 3 million out of a total population of 6,145,000.

### **Women and politics**

Of the Government's 27 ministers, 6 are women, an improvement over the past. In the National Assembly, women consistently account for a smaller percentage than men. In public administration, although many women occupy posts with significant responsibilities or are civil servants, gender parity and equality remain a challenge.

### **Indigenous women**

Indigenous women are generally illiterate and engage in such economic activities as agriculture, fishing, gravel extraction, vegetable growing and petty trade.

### **Women and the environment**

All Togolese women use firewood or charcoal to cook for the family. Only approximately 5 per cent use gas. For centuries, women have participated in forest destruction to ensure their family's survival. That contributes to climate change, poor agricultural production, undernourishment and hunger.

### **Women and health**

Continuous use of traditional means for cooking and the employment of oil, charcoal and wood as fuel cause cardiovascular diseases in women and release carbon, which is damaging to nature. The Togolese Government is concerned at children's and women's health and spares no effort to ensure that Caesarean sections are provided free of charge. The programme for free treatment of AIDS established by the Government, Population Services International and the Global Fund address the concerns of women and all other persons concerned. Yet many women die in silence as a result of their husbands' infidelity. The family planning programme of the Togolese Association for Family Well-being and various contraception methods begin to become current practice, although certain women complain of side effects. Abortion and its consequences are becoming rare. However, rural women suffer from the lack of electricity and the poor state of the roads, which causes loss of human lives, especially among working women.

### **Women and the economy**

Togolese women actively engage in building the economy of Togo. They work in markets, fields, trade, crafts and enterprises. Those who were victims of fires at the Lomé and Kara markets in 2013 deserve special attention despite the financial support provided to them by the Government. They also benefit from the

Government's inclusive financing programme, under which they receive a refundable amount of CFAF 30,000 for income-generating activities. Despite the Government's efforts, many disabled, older, migrant and other women remain excluded because they are not considered creditworthy.

### **Women and education**

Togolese girls' school enrolment ratio is high in urban and relatively low in rural areas. Many girls do not finish secondary education as a result of pregnancy due to, inter alia, the parents' irresponsibility or poverty and the reduced importance accorded to the education of girls (gender discrimination). That situation creates considerable social problems, such as generational poverty, limited life expectancy, and exposure to violence and trafficking. The Government and such NGOs as, inter alia, Amis des étrangers au Togo, Democracy and Development (GF2D) and the Network of Women's Organizations of French-speaking Africa actively engage in women's promotion, education and training.

### **Women and migration**

The migration of Togolese women is largely related to international trade and the commercial flow towards Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Gabon and other countries. Foreign women, inter alia from Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Ghana, China, Korea, Germany, Congo, Chad and Guinea migrate to Togo mainly to do business.

### **Women and the media**

Women are treated on an equal footing with men, without any discrimination. As part of media reform, the national consultation on communication offered women advantages.

### **Women and information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

Many women use mobile telephones but few (5 per cent) have recourse to the Internet.

### **Women and poverty**

Despite efforts by the Government and NGOs to promote their economic empowerment, Togolese women are affected by poverty in their daily life. Many rural women have no right or access to cultivable land. The consequences are, inter alia, family conflicts, frequent divorces, prostitution, trafficking, abortions, suicides, diseases and violence.

### **Women and disabilities**

Persons with disabilities, mental in particular, are exposed to discrimination on a daily basis.

### **Women and albinism**

Women and men suffering from albinism are discriminated against.

### **Women and aging**

Older women are often perceived as witches, especially on the basis of their skin, face and mental faculties, and are particularly discriminated against if they have not had any children. Many of them, especially in rural areas, lead a parasitic life for lack of a retirement pension. Their health is precarious, their nutrition is problematic and they die prematurely.

### **Women, religion and culture**

Many women are still victims of such traditional rites and customs as forced marriage, wife inheritance, girl fetichization in convents and genital mutilation, and of sexual and psychological torture. Numerous women often seek divine blessing or protection from evil spirits in churches, mosques, sects and voodoo cults. Many women are griots, artists and leaders.

### **Women and sport**

Togolese women are not prohibited from practicing sport but have little interest in it.

Efforts continue to be made towards gender equality in order to enhance women's identity. Women also are largely responsible for promoting their own awareness.

The following activities are necessary in order to ensure that women exercise their fundamental rights:

- A programme for the promotion of women's rights without discrimination;
- Raising of the awareness and promotion of the sexual education and sense of responsibility of girls;
- Development of the women's sense of equality with men in terms of rights and elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- Support for female students eager to continue their studies despite involuntary pregnancy and encouragement of their belief in economic opportunities that are equal with those of men;
- Promotion of the integration of migrant women into the economic development of the host countries;
- Promotion of the rights of older women and inclusion of such women in the development process if they can participate in it;
- Promotion of the rights of indigenous and rural women;
- Promotion of the rights of disabled women and, especially, assistance to women with mental disabilities;
- Further economic empowerment of women through training and support; and encouragement of the denunciation of any cases of sexual harassment;
- Elimination of illiteracy, training in resource management for women and support for women in understanding and fulfilling their role in the community;
- Promotion of female leadership.